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Psychoanalytic and shamanic initiation : a comparative study in mythmaking.

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PSYCHOANALYTIC AND SHAMANIC INITIATION:

A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN MYTHMAKING

A Dissertation Presented

by

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Education

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation addressed the problem of the construction of reality in the mental health field within the context of supervisory relationships. The potential for this process to effect abuses of power among practitioners and clients alike was also examined. The author assumed that the prevailing model in the mental health profession is a psychoanalytic one, however much this model may undergo alteration. Therefore, the objective has been to describe and analyze the psychoanalytic approach to the construction of reality in supervisory relationships. In order to do so, the relationship between analyst and analysand from which the supervisory model is developed has been examined.

The problem of the construction of reality was approached through a cross-cultural study of training processes by comparing shamanic and psychiatric initiations. Shamanic initiation provided a model for understanding the relationship between training and the construction of reality, or initiation and mythmaking. In addition, both shamans

and psychoanalysts adhere to the premise that in order to heal, one must first be healed. For this reason, the shamanic model has been used to develop a discussion of the psychoanalytic. Two models, or ideal types, have been chosen for comparison in order to provide contrast and to identify common objectives and processes. Freud's self-analysis, from which he developed both the theory and practice of psychoanalysis, is compared to the initiation of a Sioux shaman.

The result of this comparison was a discussion of psychoanalysis as an initiatory process which has as its product a personal myth or version of reality. Shamans undergo a process of instruction whereby they are initiated into the secrets of the cosmos through their dreams or visions. Analysands discover the truth about themselves through analysis of unconscious processes, including dreams and fantasies. Both shamanic and analytic initiations involve an experience of regression or return to the origins of history, whether it be social or personal, which ideally produces insight or understanding into the nature of reality, both objective and subjective. The verbal articulation of this experience by both kinds of neophyte is the creation of a myth. Mythmaking, therefore, is a term which is employed in the study to describe the construction of reality, psychoanalytic as well as shamanic. Mythmaking is also the process whereby both neophytes are healed and acquire the power to heal.

Chapters II through IV provided the description and analysis of initiation and mythmaking as they are experienced by shaman and

psychoanalyst. The transitional experience of the neophyte in initiation was described by the anthropological term, liminality. Liminality is a way of conceptualizing both the regressive and insightful aspects of initiatory experience. The term was explored in Chapters V and VI as it relates to the psychoanalytic experience of mythmaking and as it lends itself to an understanding of the problems originally posed in the study.

The liminal neophyte experiences a fluid sense of reality which is both contradictory and ambiguous. In the liminal state, the neophyte is particularly susceptible to analytic authority figures who are sanctioned to direct the construction of both the personal and the social reality (or myth) of the neophyte. The authority figures are, therefore, in a position to exercise enormous power over the neophyte and this study discusses the various ramifications of this situation. It is argued that the practice of supervision in the mental health field tends to institutionalize a neo-initiatory situation among even credentialed practitioners and that the resulting state of protracted liminality lends itself to potential abuses of power.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1967, as a newly enlisted psychiatric caseworker without prior experience or training in social work, I went to work in a small public institution for the treatment of disturbed children. There I served as a member of a clinical staff of ten or more persons, assuming casework responsibilities. The staff was composed, for the most part, of psychiatric social workers by whom I was trained and supervised for three years. The chief clinical social worker, together with the director of residential living, were the two dominant leadership figures at the institution. They worked together cooperatively, providing a uniform policy approach to treatment and staff supervision.

At this particular institution, the theoretical orientation of treatment was psychoanalytic. The general assumption prevailed throughout the entire institution that successful treatment and care of clients was contingent upon an understanding of self and own unconscious processes. This assumption emerged in the supervision of staff by directors of the institutional departments and pervaded all institutional joint staffing conferences. The personality makeup of the individual staff member consequently became the subject of public scrutiny. The boundaries of professional competence were officially defined by personal concerns as well as public performance. Such

judgments were the outcome of the assumption that rehabilitation of clients depended on rehabilitation of therapists.

The assumption itself was one I never challenged and still do not today. In its application, however, a very ominous situation developed which ultimately pervaded the institution and interfered not only with staff functioning but also with treatment and care of clients. In dissolving those boundaries between professional and personal life which in a non-mental health setting would perhaps not officially be challenged, the directors of the institution extended their control beyond the province of professional activity. Problems and decisions regarding such personal matters as marriage, divorce, wayward children and spouses, sexual intimacies with colleagues, individual private fears and anxieties, etc., all were the subject of supervisory scrutiny. Not all of these personal matters were officially available for general consumption. But the institutional directors made it their business to keep informed at least informally. At any given official meeting, therefore, the unspoken threat of public exposure prevailed. From time to time such exposures occurred - if not always explicitly, at least by innuendo. The form exposure most commonly took was a personalized rendering of some professional transaction. This rendering took the form of a psychoanalytic interpretation or construction, with motives imputed. The interpretation was selected for the occasion by the particular authority figure (supervisor) and considered

a verifiable explanation of the presumed pathology of the individual under review. These public diagnoses of staff members by supervisors transformed what should have been meetings concerned with professional business into insidious forums for character assassination. In private meetings, much more thorough dissections took place.

The overall effect was to call into question for all of the staff the most basic assumptions about self and world. Staff members became subject to confusion and self-doubt. An atmosphere of paranoia pervaded and staff became increasingly crippled in their capacity to function effectively. For reasons I could not fathom at the time, most of us colluded to a self-destructive degree with the dominant behavioral mode. At first we not only condoned, but even glamourized our situation. We believed we were privy to sacred expertise. Eventually, as pain intensified, the price of this expertise became increasingly banal. Yet, despite a few fruitless incursions with the authorities, staff passivity prevailed - until three years later, when one-third of the professional staff finally left, including myself.

My initial response to this first experience in the mental health field was that it must somehow be unique, that other mental health facilities were probably managed in less destructive and hostile ways with less debilitating consequences for its staff members. My seven subsequent years in the mental health field have revealed to me - both

through my own experiences and those of colleagues and students - that yes, there are less painful places to work, but that there are also many equally painful places to work. It has become apparent to me that the basic mode of professional behavior and experience I have described is a dominant one in both the more and the less painful places to work, whether they be residential institutions, community mental health centers, halfway houses, even private offices. A very basic sense of psychic danger and violation of self prevails in these facilities, together with a resultingly intense struggle for power and control.

This struggle for power is not referred to as "power," which is probably one reason why this study is not centered around ideas of power. It is referred to as "mental health," "reality testing," "professional competence," "diagnostic skills," and so on. In these various disguises, the essential phenomenon of power escapes undetected and unaccounted for. Instead, the struggle is recognized as one over who has the authority to define reality, not only professional reality, but personal reality as well. It is assumed by mental health supervisors that they have the authority to interpret the professional world. They also presume to interpret or construct the private world of staff. Inevitably, the contradiction emerges that each staff member assumes an individual sense of authority over his or her private reality as well. Here the struggle for power merges with the struggle

over who defines reality. Since the major preoccupation of the mental health field is precisely the defining of reality, it follows that enormous power is at stake.

The observations I have made above have led me to ask the following questions. How is reality constructed in the mental health field and what is inherent in this process which enables the potential abuse of power and persons in the process of treatment? What is it in the training of mental health professionals which either fails to prevent such practices or perhaps even encourages them? How does a situation, such as the one I have described, develop from the fundamental premise that in order to heal, one must first be healed? Why were the authorities in that institution able to wield their power without challenge and why did so many of us collude in the perpetuation of our own pain? And why, also, were we finally able to leave?

A number of different approaches, psychological, social, political, etc., might be chosen to address the concerns I have described. However, as the dominant treatment model at the institution described, as well as most other mental health institutions in our society, is psychoanalytical, I have taken as my point of departure the psychoanalytic construction of reality as it is experienced by a neophyte (as most of us staff members were at that time). In so doing, I am also addressing: 1) the assumption that in order to heal one must first be healed, and 2) the psychoanalytic interpretation of that

assumption, which is that one heals by (re)constructing psychological reality.

I have chosen to approach these questions by focusing on a comparative study of the initiation of shamans and psychoanalysts. Shamans in non-western cultures perform the same functions as psychoanalysts in western society. Both practitioners adhere to the premise that in order to heal one must first be healed and this healing experience involves the constructing of reality by the neophyte. A study of the processes whereby these two prototypes are trained reveals striking similarities. There are also significant cultural differences to be considered which provide both contrast and perspective to the issues under consideration. What the shamanic model offers the psychoanalytic is simply one approach to organization and analysis of the psychoanalytic experience. Psychoanalysis is then described as a process of initiation. Mythmaking is employed as a term which describes both the shamanic and the psychoanalytic constructions of reality. In initiation, liminality, a term which describes the characteristic experiences of neophytes in passage, is used to interpret and understand some of the characteristic feelings and behaviors of analysands or psychoanalytic neophytes.

In addressing the models of shaman and psychoanalyst, I will describe the initiation of ideal types: Freud's self-initiation into the realm of psychoanalysis which has ultimately provided the basic

model for training and practice in the mental health field and Black Elk's initiation as a Sioux Shaman which serves as a prototype for all types of shamanic initiation and healing. In Chapter II, I will discuss mythmaking and initiation and I will demonstrate an inter-relationship between the two concepts. In Chapters III and IV, I will discuss the processes of shamanic and psychoanalytic initiation and mythmaking. In Chapter V, I will review the concept of liminality as it relates to the experience of psychoanalysis. Chapter VI will present conclusions of this study as they relate to the questions posed in this introduction.

C H A P T E R II

INITIATION AND MYTHMAKING

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.
>
> Joseph Campbell[1]

> The term initiation in the most general sense denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition; the novice emerges from his ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become another.
>
> Mircea Eliade[2]

In this study, I will attempt to apply concepts of initiation and myth to psychoanalytic process. There is an inherent difficulty in such an attempt in that the concepts themselves have been derived from the study of cultures which are non-western. I am, to be exact, applying anthropological terms for non-western processes to a western process. A number of contradictions arise from such a mixing of cultures and concepts, and I will try to point some of them out. In this chapter, I will develop definitions of both myth and initiation. I will also suggest a relationship between the two processes, namely that mythmaking is an aspect of initiatory experience.

The definition of myth which I have appropriated for this study has been summarized as follows:

> ...the myth is thought to express the absolute truth, because it narrates a sacred history; that is, a trans-human revelation which took place at the dawn of the Great Time, in the holy time of the beginnings (in illo tempore). Being real and sacred, the myth becomes exemplary, and consequently repeatable, for it serves as a model, and by the same token as justification, for all human actions. In other words, a myth is a true history of what came to pass at the beginning of Time, and one which provides the pattern for human behavior. In imitating the exemplary acts of a god or of a mythic hero, or simply by recounting their adventures, the man of an archaic society detaches himself from profane time and magically re-enters the Great Time, the sacred time.[3]

The key phrase in this passage is that, "Myth is a true history of what came to pass at the beginning of Time, and one which provides the pattern for human behavior." The recounting of myth is always a reliving of the origins, a reenactment of creation which enables the participant to become contemporary with the past.[4] In order to regain again the time of the origins, the mythmaker-neophyte must experience a return in time, a regression which constitutes a reliving of the past within the present. The ritual of initiation is a process of reliving myth which involves a "regressus ad uterum."[5] I will make use of this definition as it pertains to the making of archaic social myth and of psychoanalytic personal myth as well. Before extending this definition to apply to psychoanalysis, I feel obliged to examine some problems posed by the author of the definition.

To begin with, Eliade makes explicitly clear that myths by definition cannot be personal in nature.

> There is no myth which is not the unveiling of a "mystery," the revelation of a primordial event which inaugurated either a constituent structure of reality or a kind of human behavior. Thence it follows that, because of its own mode of being, the myth cannot be particular, private or personal.[6]

Not only can myths not be personal, they must "reveal a mystery" and record the acts of the immortals. In effect, Eliade is defining myth as a religious phenomenon and rightly so because it derives from the study of societies which are religious in their accepted view of reality just as ours is secular and "scientific." I am therefore taking a liberty with Eliade's concept by applying it to the secular process of psychoanalysis. However, in more recent works, Eliade himself appears to be more receptive to the idea of a psychoanalytic, personal myth.

> For psychoanalysis, for example, the truly primordial is the "human primordial," earliest childhood. The child lives in a mythical, paradisal time... This is why the unconscious displays the structure of a private mythology. We can go even further and say not only that the unconscious is "mythological" but also that some of its contents carry cosmic values; in other words that they reflect the modalities, processes and destiny of life and living matter. It can even be said that modern man's only real contact with cosmic sacrality is effected by the unconscious whether in his dreams and his imaginative life or in the creations that arise out of the unconscious (poetry, games, spectacles, etc.).[7]

It is my position that all the constituent elements of myth, as Eliade defines it, may be found in the creation and enactment of the psychoanalytic process which, I will demonstrate, is essentially an initiatory process. There are three differences to be noted between the creation of archaic and psychoanalytic myth, all of which I consider to be differences of cultural context rather than of the form itself. The first is the already noted personal nature of the psychoanalytic myth. Eliade himself notes that such a differentiating characteristic is attributable to the difference between modern and archaic societies.

> ... upon the plane of social living, there was not break in continuity between the archaic world and the modern world. The one great difference was that of the presence, in the majority of the individuals who constitute modern societies, of a personal thinking that was absent, or almost so, among the members of traditional societies.[8]

A shift of emphasis is indicated here, but not a change in the nature of myth, which remains social. The imagery of myth becomes more internal and less external, but the constituents remain the same. The psychoanalytic myth does not relinquish its social nature because it does not come into being until it is spoken to the analyst. What it does is to <u>add</u> the dimension of personal and psychological to the social.

The second difference is that of the sacred as opposed to the secular point of view. The western mind advances a secular-religious dichotomy not to be found in archaic cultures. As a rule, once the

idea of the secular has been introduced into these cultures, they have been considered "westernized." For the west, there is not only a split, but a clear antagonism between religious and secular, with the scientist seeking to uproot the basic assumptions put forward by the religious framework. Freud participated in the so-called rationalist, scientific viewpoint and rejected the idea of the sacred or religious.[9] For my purposes, the issue of sacred versus secular does not seem all that significant. For western scientists, and for Freud, science is considered the author of truth; for non-western cultures, religion is the source of truth. It seems to me the common denominator is truth itself, not its derivative, that, as Eliade states, myth is considered a true story.

The final distinction between archaic and western myth is related to the central preoccupation of myth with time, specifically with regression in time and the breaking with present temporality to retrieve an "immortal history." The concept of time itself, however, and of history, reveals itself very differently from archaic to modern viewpoint. This difference in the sense of time, time being a central preoccupation of both kinds of myth, strikes me as one more way to the root of cultural differences. When Eliade tells us that myth by definition cannot be personal because myths recount primordial events, he is stating that myths are characterized by their participation in sacred time. Archaic sacred time is the time of the creation (in illo

tempore), the creation being not a personal but a cosmic event. As we transpose Eliade's concept into a secular world-view, the notion of archaic sacred time loses its former meaning. Freud rejected the idea of a sacred reality and replaced it with the rational notion of a scientific and provable reality. The concept of myth can, in fact, survive the exchange of secular for sacred. It can survive because the concept of immortality prevails, albeit in altered form, in the scientific universe, specifically Freud's.

Eliade argues that western culture is distinguished by its preoccupation with "historiographical consciousness," the obsessive writing down of all that can be recorded as history.[10] As it is sequential, the process is assumed to be linear. It is also an open process. History is pictured as a continual evolution towards an as yet undiscerned goal: the concept of progress is embedded in our culture. But the events of the present and the future do not precisely recreate the past. Immortality, in the secular world, does have specific non-religious meaning. One idea of immortality is related to memory: an idea which remains essentially unchanged, and unforgotten, throughout the course of history. Freud restated this notion in his concept of the unconscious fantasy. Similarly, immortality is achieved by art, which also transcends time. This idea includes the immortality of art which prevails in value through the ages, as well as the notion

of aesthetic transport which lifts the individual out of the present moment.

From the archaic point of view, the western preoccupation with the written word is counteracted by the dependence on oral tradition by many non-western cultures. In the archaic world, it would appear that history is idealized as a repetition of a known past rather than a movement forward into an unknown future. In the western world, where preoccupation with individuality is a distinguishing cultural earmark, history itself becomes personal. The history of the archaic individual is created by supernatural beings; it is preordained from the beginning of time and remains only to be lived out. The ultimate achievement of the archaic individual (and it is really a collective achievement, as archaic personal history coincides with social history) would be to recreate the initial, great achievements of the gods. For the westerner, history is the achievement of individual as well as collective experience.

The modern psychoanalytic myth must by definition embrace the western notion of time. Myth for archaic man involved an act of repetition, a recreation and reliving of the past which made one contemporary with that past. Psychoanalytic myth, on the other hand, involves not only a recreation of the past through a reliving of memory, but the evolution of a new history out of this experience. It

is as if by entering consciously into the cyclical return of one's own personal history one could thereby break with the cycle forever. At least the cycle would never repeat itself in precisely the same way again; a new form would emerge from this reentry into the past. This new form is the equivalent of a new personal history, a new idea of self which emerges when unconscious fantasies are brought under the review of the conscious mind, thereby altering the content of consciousness. Psychoanalytic history also resembles archaic history in that it is spoken. We equate this new form, or newly discerned history, as it is told, with a new myth. It is not simply the retelling of the old history, but is additionally a new perception of that history. Thus, through transformed consciousness, the western individual seeks to control his or her destiny and deny the pre-ordaining power of the gods. Psychoanalytic initiation involves the creation of a new history out of the retelling of the old.

Archaic initiations usually include the retelling of the history of the initiate's culture. This accounting is provided by the cosmological myths which are always histories of the origins of individual cultures. If cosmologies are not actually repeated during initiation rites, they are always alluded to. These cosmologies are more than the explanation of how a society began. They provide the important function of setting off the entire central value system

which that particular culture expresses. From cosmologies, we learn what is allowed and what is not and why. A primary characteristic of the cosmological myth is that it embodies a weltanshauung, a world view, a theory of the universe.

> For the act of coming to be is, at the same time, the emergence of a reality and the disclosure of its fundamental structures. When the cosmogonic myth tells us how the world was created, it is also revealing the emergence of that totality of the real which is the Cosmos, and its ontological laws: it shows in what sense the World is.[11]

To become initiated, the initiate learns secret aspects of his or her own particular cosmology or social world which apply to the particular status she or he is about to assume. An understanding of the cosmos is acquired through which the initiate becomes transformed. In our own culture this gnosis may be concerned instead with the origins of the personal cosmos or world view. It may be either one or both. In Freud's case, it was both. Generally speaking, initiatory processes which concern the personal cosmos may be related to forms of psychotherapy. Initiatory processes which related to social or world views may be related to educational processes. From my point of view the education (training) of a psychotherapist must include both. The psychoanalytic model meets these requirements by providing a theory of human nature as well as a theory about the individual neophyte.

Initiation is a process of learning whereby the creation of a new self is consciously undertaken. There is a preconceived pattern of instruction to the initiatory process. While self-initiations have been recognized, the notion of initiation implies a relationship to society, both in its preconceived direction and in the recognition which serves to complete its process. The new self which emerges achieves power insofar as it achieves social sanction. Generally, those initiations which are documented involve groups of initiates who undertake their experience ensemble. However, individual initiations also occur and follow the same pattern as group initiations. Shamanic initiations, which will be reviewed in the next chapter, often take the form of such individual ritual. All initiations have as their goal a change in social status, the admission to a specified social group. The initiate may, upon ceremonial completion, be acknowledged by that group as a whole, or by as few as a single representative of the entire group. In either case, the sanction of the entire group is implied, and behind that, the larger group of society as a whole.

Initiation provides a new status for the initiate in society. As Eliade writes, "Initiation introduces the candidate into the human community and into the world of spiritual and cultural values."[12] This new relationship between initiate and society is a transaction of

power. The recognition of the new status granted the initiate by society endows him or her with the special powers which accrue to that new social status. The initiate is changed or becomes new and society affirms this. Thus we can sum up the matter of social powers as they are endowed through initiation. There is, however, another sense of power, perhaps more difficult to quantify or describe, which is also developed on the part of the individual initiate. This other sense of power is not social but personal in nature; it is something felt and experienced by the initiate as a part of his or her new being. In this study, I will approach this idea of personal power as modestly as possible. I will refer to it as a sense of inner change or transformation which enables the initiate to not only feel but also act in ways which were not possible before, specifically to achieve an emotional as well as intellectual mastery of the initiatory experience. The transformation experienced by the initiate has been described by Victor Turner as follows.

> The arcane knowledge or "gnosis" obtained in the liminal period is felt to change the inmost nature of the neophyte, impressing him, as a seal impresses wax, with the characteristics of his new state. It is not a mere acquisition of knowledge, but a change in being. His apparent passivity is revealed as an absorption of powers which will become active after his social status has been redefined in the aggregation rites.[13]

Ideally, the acquisition of these personal powers should correspond

to the acquisition of specific social powers, as the inner reality for which the social endowment is an outer expression. There is, of course, no guarantee that the individual initiate will experience precisely what his social mentors expect him or her to accomplish. Perhaps a definition of an ideal, successful initiation would be the achievement of both kinds of power, social and personal. A partial initiation might achieve one or the other.

In 1908, van Gennep advanced the term rite of passage to describe those rituals which societies have developed to give form to critical life crises and transformation.[14] He included initiation rites in this category. The concept of a passage serves to emphasize the idea of movement on the part of the individual, whom he considered to be in social transition. In order to elucidate the social phenomenon to which he referred, van Gennep used the analogy of a territorial passage, and this basic structural analogy continues today to permeate the literature on initiation. The basic structure which van Gennep determined to characterize rites of passage includes three major phases: separation, transition (margin), and incorporation (aggregation).

> I have tried to assemble here all the ceremonial patterns which accompany a passage from one situation to another or from one cosmic or social world to another. Because of the importance of these transitions, I think it legitimate to single out rites of passage as a special category, which under further

> analysis may be subdivided into rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation. These three subcategories are not developed to the same extent by all peoples or in every ceremonial pattern. Rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages. Transition rites may play an important part, for instance, in pregnancy, betrothal, the delivery of a second child, in remarriage, or in the passage from the second to the third age group. Thus, although a complete scheme of rites of passage theoretically includes preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and post-liminal rites (rites of incorporation), in specific instances these three types are not always equally important or equally elaborated.[15]

Rites of initiation, he points out, are rites of passage in which the symbolism and ceremony surrounding transition are protracted. Later in this paper we will discuss how the concept of liminality (literally, being on the threshold or limen) has been developed to refer to the core experience of transition which lies at the heart of initiation. (See Chapter V). In the following chapter we will have occasion to note the existence of all three phases in the initiation of shamans. Nevertheless, the experience of the shaman also provides a good illustration of how the crux of initiation remains transition.

Van Gennep and Eliade both explain the initiatory transition as a symbolic death.

> The initiate's anaesthesia is an important factor in the rite of initiation. In America, it is accomplished by swallowing tobacco or peyote; elsewhere by fumigation, flagellations, poor treatment, corporal punishment, etc. The purpose is to made the novice "die," to make him forget his former personality and his former world.[16]

Therefore, if we wish to understand the concept of initiation, we must focus on the notion of symbolic death. Embodied in the idea of initiatory death is, once more, the root, mythical concept of time. Because we are dealing here with symbolic death, we are concerned not with the ultimate cessation of time (which is physical death in the western, secular sense) but rather with its temporary suspension, the mythical transcendence.

> In the scenario of initiatory rites, "death" corresponds to the temporary return to chaos: hence it is the paradigmatic expression of the end of a mode of being - the mode of ignorance and of the child's irresponsibility. Initiatory death provides the clean slate on which will be written the successive revelations whose end is the formation of a new man.[17]

Initiatory death has the specific character of a regression: a suspension of mundane temporality which enables a retrieval of the beginning, a birth. This idea of death reflects the archaic notion of time as a cyclical rather than a linear passage. Therefore, death achieves a return, and the symbolism of initiatory death is universally that of regression.

> First and foremost, there is the well-known symbolism of initiation rituals implying a <u>regressus ad uterum</u> ... From the archaic stages of culture the initiation of adolescents includes a series of rites whose symbolism is crystal clear: through them, the novice is first transformed into an embryo and then is reborn. Initiation is equivalent to a second birth. It is through the agency of initiation that the adolescent becomes both a socially responsible and culturally awakened being. The

> return to the womb is signified either by the neophyte's seculsion in a hut, or by his being symbolically swallowed by a monster, or by his entering a sacred spot identified with the uterus of Mother Earth.[18]

Initiatory death, however, is as much a birth as it is a death, as much of a beginning as an ending.

> The majority of initiatory ordeals more or less clearly imply a ritual death followed by resurrection or a new birth. The central moment of every initiation is represented by the ceremony symbolizing the death of the novice and his return to the fellowship of the living. But he returns to life a new man, assuming another mode of being. Initiatory death signifies the end at once of childhood, of ignorance, and of the profane condition.[19]

Therefore, concepts of initiatory death and regression are not, in their essence, concepts of events but are instead concepts of process and transformation. The interplay of life and death, of time and timelessness, makes this process a dialectical one. To contemplate the meaning of initiatory death or of regression, one must simultaneously consider the corresponding developments of regeneration and return which are inevitably generated from the dynamic of disintegration.

This process of rebirth and return constitutes the mythmaking aspect of initiation. The relationship between initiation and myth now becomes clear. Initiatory death induces the critical experience

of regression without which the essential gnosis or transformation could not be achieved. However, the return from initiatory death is the giving form to that transformation. This formgiving, for shaman and psychoanalyst alike, occurs through the spoken word. Mythmaking provides a verbal articulation of initiation which suggests that the experience has been somehow organized and understood. Initiation is never complete without its mythical product and myth cannot be generated without initiatory experience. A reciprocal relationship between experience and the articulation of experience is implied. Because myth describes initiation, it expresses the same pattern - that of a break with temporality and a subsequent return. However, the inextricable relationship between myth and initiation lies in the fact that the return is accomplished only as it is told. In the following two chapters, I will discuss further how speech recovers temporality and reintegrates the initiate with the world.

CHAPTER II - FOOTNOTES

1. Joseph Campbell describing the monomyth in The Hero With a Thousand Faces (New York, 1956) 30.

2. Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation (New York, 1958) x.

3. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries (New York, 1960) 23.

4. Eliade, Myth and Reality (New York, 1963) 78.

5. Ibid., 79.

6. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, 16.

7. Eliade, Myth and Reality, 77.

8. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, 24.

9. See Freud, "Civilization and its Discontents", "The Future of an Illusion", The Standard Edition (London 1962) vol. xxi.

10. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, 234.

11. Ibid., 15.

12. Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation, x.

13. Turner, The Forest of Symbols (Ithaca, 1970): 102.

14. Van Gennep, The Rites of Passage (Chicago, 1960) vii, xxi.

15. Ibid., 10, 11.

16. Ibid., 81.

17. Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation, xiii.

18. Eliade, Myth and Reality, 79, 80.

19. Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation, xii.

C H A P T E R III

SHAMANIC INITIATION

Shamans are men and women of healing power who are traditionally found in archaic or non-western cultures. They can be found throughout the non-western world and have been studied among the tribes of Central and North Asia, the cultures of Japan and China as well as the Near East, among the Indians of South and North America, the Eskimos and so on. In North America we are most familiar with the shaman as the Indian medicine man. While many of the formal characteristics of the shaman (including social status) vary from culture to culture, certain underlying features do not. Mircea Eliade states that the universal distinguishing specialty of the shaman is the power to heal through ecstatic experience. He defines shamans as masters of ecstatic technique, by which he means persons who have gained control over such trance or trance-like states as dream, hallucination or vision.[1] Shamanic ecstasy is always achieved through a range of unconscious or semi-conscious experiences, including dreams, visions, hallucinations, seizures, daydreams. Two features of shamanic trance are significant. Always, the vision acquired through shamanic trance follows a specific pattern which takes the form of a flight by the shaman. Additionally, the shaman has the power to understand and control the experience of his or her vision.[2] Shamanic ecstasy has a

pattern which is interpretable by the shaman. To be a master of ecstatic technique is to be an interpreter of dreams or visions by virtue of one's ability to control access to trance or unconscious states. Dreams are believed by shamanic cultures to be a primary source of instructional experience and cultural wisdom. The shamans not only practice healing arts through their dreams but are also themselves initiated through dreams.

Shamans believe that all forms of illness are determined by loss of the soul. In archaic cultures, dreams are believed to record the wanderings of the soul when it has left the body. In order to cure those individuals who are afflicted, the shamans develop the specialty of contacting the spirit world through dreams in order to retrieve the disabled soul and bring it back to health. Shamans accomplish these cures through sessions of ritual trance. These seances tend to follow the same general pattern.

> A shamanic session generally consists of the following items: first an appeal to the auxiliary spirits, which, more often than not, are those of animals, and a dialogue with them in a secret language; secondly drum-playing and a dance, preparatory to the mystic journey; and thirdly the trance (real or simulated) during which the shaman's soul is believed to have left his body. The objective of every shamanic session is to obtain the ecstasy, for it is only in ecstasy that the shaman can <u>fly</u> through the air or <u>descend into Hell</u>, that is, fulfill his mission of curing illness and shepherding souls.[3]

Drumming and dancing as well as pipe-smoking and singing were common features of shamanic seance in many cultures. Also, many shamans make diagnoses by looking through crystals to determine the condition of the soul, and many shamans removed illnesses by sucking them out of the body of the patient, often with special ceremonial instruments. The formal aspects of the shamanic seance vary from culture to culture. The universal and most important feature of substance, however, is the trance or dream. All of these theatrical and magical effects serve to advance the shaman towards his ultimate objective of ecstasy.

As I have noted, the function of trance is to enable the shaman communication with the spirit world. Guardian spirits who facilitate this objective are usually animals, and the shaman's achievement is that he or she learns to talk to them, to utter their cries. Animals, it is commonly believed, have information humans do not in that they understand the secrets of nature. Archaic cosmologies are characteristically replete with animal figures who impart some portion of cosmic understanding to a given culture. By learning the language of the animals, the shaman is privy to the arcane secrets of universal law known only to the world of the spirits.

> ...To communicate with animals, to speak their language and become their friend and master is to appropriate a spiritual life much richer than the merely human life of ordinary mortals. And, on the other hand, the prestige of animals in the

> eyes of the "primitive" is very considerable; they know secrets of life and nature; they even know secrets of longevity and immortality.[4]

The process whereby shamans receive these powers to heal follows the familiar pattern of initiatory experience. Shamans are selected by hereditary transmission, spontaneous vocation (through an unsolicited vision), or by personal quest.[5] The initiatory procedure they subsequently underwent is twofold in nature, including both traditional and ecstatic aspects.

> ...by whatever method he may have been designated, a shaman is recognized as such only after having received two kinds of instruction. The first is ecstatic (e.g., dreams, visions, trances); the second is traditional (e.g., shamanic techniques, names and functions of the spirits, mythology and geneology of the clan, secret language).[6]

The traditional aspects of initiation are imparted to the neophyte by a tribal elder, or, in this case, master shaman. For the most part, tribal lore is passed on in such a fashion, in preparation for, or completion of, the neophyte's first ecstasy or flight. Sometimes, however, a formal course of instruction does not take place. Rather, the shaman receives instruction entirely through his dreams and visions. In this case, the traditional and ecstatic combine into one experience. I am led to conclude that the traditional aspect of initiation could be slighted in favor of the ecstatic, but that the reverse would not be true. Visionary experience remains the irreplaceable core of the

shaman's initiation. This means, that not only must the shaman have a dream or trance-like experience, but that she or he must also understand the meaning of that dream experience.

Shamanic initiations clearly fall within the three phase pattern described by van Gennep: separation, margin, and aggregation. In order to provide a context for further understanding shamanic initiation, I will refer to an example of initiation among the Sioux. I will then analyze the three phases of shamanic initiation: initiatory illness, ecstatic journey, witness and mythmaking.

Black Elk

The healing power of the Sioux shaman, as among many of the Indian tribes of North America is acquired through dream. The Vision Quest of the Plains tribes is a practice wherein the neophyte wandered for three or four days alone on the prairie, fasting and praying until she or he receives initiatory directives through a dream. In fact, the Vision Quest plays a central role in determining various other kinds of social identity as well as that of the shaman.[7] In this fashion, the entire culture adhered to the authority of the dream, of which the shaman was the interpreter supreme.

Shamanic specialty among the Sioux is a relatively complex arrangement and as such reflects the structure of Sioux cosmology. Essentially,

the Sioux believe there is one great power or energy which emanates throughout the universe. The source of this power is a mysterious being known as Wakan Tanka. However, the intermediaries between this being and the lesser beings of humans are the birds and the animals. Each of these creatures individually represents a special power, for good or for ill, over human affairs. Those who wish to acquire the specific supernatural powers of a given animal do so by dreaming the Dream of the Elk, Bear, Wolf, etc., and performing the ceremony which interprets that dream. Those affairs which are controlled by the specific animal may then be influenced by the Dreamer. An individual who has dreamed of the Elk or the Buffalo does not have the power of the Wolf, unless he or she also experiences that dream. All of these dreamers have some power to heal and are, in a sense, shamans or medicine men who may sing the healing songs they learn in their dreams. However, there is a hierarchy of healers in which the true shamans are holy men, distinguished both by their greater accumulation of skills and by the durability of their demonstrated powers. In order to achieve the highest rank of shamanhood, the neophyte follows the general pattern described below.

First the individual must have demonstrated, probably from early childhood, a proclivity for dreaming dreams wherein he or she is addressed by an animal. Later on, during adolescence or after, the

potential Dreamer seeks the power of a vision by wandering off into the wilderness and fasting for four days at a time. If a vision or dream is achieved on this quest, the next crucial step is the enactment of the dream in an official ceremony. This is achieved through consultation with an already established shaman who both interprets and verifies the substance of the dream for the dreamer and directs the course of the ceremony. In addition to the powers acquired during the Vision Quest, the dreamer who wishes to become a shaman must also participate in the Sun Dance, although the Sun Dance is not reserved for potential shamans alone.

> To the man who had been successful in receiving a vision, who accomplished the Sun Dance in its highest form, and who completed the course of theological instruction under the guidance of a shaman, the Sioux accorded great respect. Such a man became responsible for interpreting to the people the Sioux way of life as set forth by the gods. His authority extended to the supervision of all ceremonies; his advice was sought by civil leaders in all matters of serious import. Shamans formed a kind of priesthood and were granted almost theocratic authority in periods of religious observance and during times of national crises.[9]

The narrative provided by Black Elk in Neihardt's book, Black Elk Speaks, is a simply recounted example of shamanic initiation among the Sioux.[10] The signs of his vocation began when Black Elk was of a very young age.

> I was four years old then, and I think it must have been the next summer that I first heard the

> voices... It was like somebody calling me,
> and I thought it was my mother, but there was
> nobody there. This happened more than once,
> and always made me afraid, so that I ran home.[11]

The next experience Black Elk describes happens when he is five. Riding on horseback as a thunderstorm approaches from the west, he sees a kingbird who speaks to him. The kingbird says, "Listen! A voice is calling you."

> Then I looked up at the clouds and two men were
> coming there, headfirst like arrows slanting down;
> and as they came, they sang a sacred song and the
> thunder was like drumming.[12]

He assures us that these early encounters were not, in fact, ordinary dreams but real occurrences. They happened intermittently at this early age. Then at nine, Black Elk has a great vision. This vision follows very clearly the structure of shamanic flight. It includes the Dream of the Horse, references to the Sioux myth of creation, the grandfather spirits, and also enables Black Elk to see into the future.

Immediately before the experience of his vision, Black Elk becomes ill. The onset of the sickness begins when, a day or two before the vision, he hears a voice saying, "It is time; now they are calling you."[13] Black Elk stands up to follow the voice and his legs begin to hurt. The following day, not only his legs but also his arms and face become so swollen he must ride in a pony drag. Later, lying

in his tepee, he sees through the opening the same two men, like arrows, coming headfirst down from the clouds. They land and speak to him, "Hurry! Come! Your Grandfathers are calling you!"[14] At this point, Black Elk's legs no longer bother him and he gets up to follow the two men. A little cloud descends from the sky and carries Black Elk back up into the heavens, leaving his mother and father behind, where he can see them below him.

When he reaches the heavens, he first encounters a bay horse who then speaks to him.

> Behold me! My life history you shall see.
> Behold them! Their history you shall know.[15]

The horse then shows to Black Elk dozens of horses, black, white, sorrel and buckskin, facing from the four corners of the earth. It seems to Black Elk that the entire sky is full of dancing horses. Next Black Elk sees a tepee and is invited in to a council of the Grandfathers. (The six Grandfathers were the spirit Grandfathers of the Sioux nation.)

> His voice was very kind, but I shook all over with fear now, for I knew that these were not old men, but the Powers of the World... I knew this and was afraid, until the first grandfather spoke again: "Behold them yonder when the sun goes down, the thunder beings! You shall see, and have from them my power; and they shall take you to the high and lonely center of the earth that you may see; even to the place where the sun continually shines. They shall take you there to understand."[16]

Now Black Elk is given a cup of water, symbolic of the power of life, and then a bow, symbolic of the power to destroy. He is charged with the power to heal nations and individuals. One of the grandfathers hands him a peace pipe (the sacred pipe given to the Sioux by the White Buffalo Woman sent from Wakan Tanka) with a spotted eagle perched on its stem.

> With this pipe you shall walk upon the earth and whatsoever sickens there you shall make well.[17]

After this, the vision continues to unfold at the direction of the Grandfathers. All of the episodes are rich in the symbolism of Sioux cosmology. Black Elk is shown the tree in the center of the hoop of the Sioux Nation and told that with his powers he will make the tree blossom. He is given the power of the eagle to fly across the world. Then he encounters the Spirit of the Earth and visualizes a regression from old age back to childhood.

> Now I knew the sixth Grandfather was about to speak, he who was the spirit of the Earth, and it was that he was very old, but more as men are old. His hair was long and white, his face was all in wrinkles and his eyes were deep and dim. I stared at him, for it seemed I knew him somehow; and as I stared, he slowly changed, for he was growing backwards into youth, and when he had become a boy, I knew that he was myself with all the years that would be mine at last. When he was old again, he said: "My boy, have courage, for my power shall be yours, and you shall need it, for your nation on the earth will have great troubles. Come."[18]

The horses return to speak to Black Elk. Then he looks down at earth and has a series of visions of future disasters which will come to his people. Black Elk understands his mission will be to save his people. Then he receives a series of songs, songs of power with which he will be able to heal his people as a nation and as individuals. Towards the end of his vision, he stands at the pinnacle of the world where he is given the star of understanding (the morning star which he will rise with from then on).

> Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I was more than I can tell and I understood more than I was; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And it was that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight in the center grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy... Then as I stood there, two men were coming from the east, head first like arrows flying, and between them rose the daybreak star. They came and gave a herb to me and said: "With this on earth you shall undertake anything and do it." It was the daybreak-star herb, the herb of understanding, and they told me to drop it on the earth. I saw it falling far, and when it struck the earth it rooted and grew and flowered four blossoms on one stem, a blue, a white, a scarlet, and a yellow; and the rays from these streamed upward to the heavens so that all creatures saw it and in no place was there darkness.[19]

Black Elk has gained access to the secrets of the universe and returns to earth with his sacred songs. He discovers upon returning

that he has been unconscious. His parents tell him he has been ill for twelve days, but has been cured by a medicine man. Black Elk believes that he was cured by the Grandfathers he met in the sky.

It was a matter of several years before Black Elk became fully able to deal with the implications of his vision, and the interval is a matter of interest. At first, Black Elk was afraid to speak to anyone about his dream. He was afraid people would think him crazy. In fact, his parents did find him a bit peculiar. Black Elk spent much time alone, thinking about his vision, and his friends seemed strange to him. He sensed that he had acquired new powers as a result of his dream, but he did not know what to do with them. The medicine man who supposedly had cured him noticed a difference in Black Elk and spoke to his parents.

> "Your boy there is sitting in a sacred manner. I do not know what it is, but there is something special for him to do, for just as I cam in I could see a power like a light all through his body."[20]

For years, Black Elk continued to hear voices. When he heard animal noises from his tepee at night or went out hunting, he could hear the creatures speak to him. When thunderstorms approached, voices would address him from out of the clouds. Always, they addressed him expectantly, calling on him to make use of his powers. Always, Black Elk felt at a loss. He felt he had powers; but he did

not know how he was supposed to use them. His expectations of himself continued to grow and his anxiety increased until finally, at the age of sixteen, his fear produced a deep crisis.

> A terrible time began for me then, and I could not tell anybody, not even my father and mother. I was afraid to see a cloud coming up; and whenever one did, I could hear the thunder calling to me: "Behold your Grandfathers! Make haste!" Icould understand the birds when they sang, and they were always saying: It is time! It is time![21]

As Black Elk continues to experience increasing fear, he thinks in fact that he might be crazy. His parents, too, are concerned and compare his condition to the time of his great vision and his illness at nine. This time, however, it is Black Elk himself who finally seeks the advice of an elder shaman. After he examines the substance of Black Elk's vision, the shaman tells Black Elk that his anxiety about his vision can only be resolved through the act of telling it to someone, of sharing it with his people.

> Nephew, I know now what the trouble is! You must do what the bay horse in your vision wanted you to do. You must do your duty and perform this vision for your people upon earth. You must have the horse dance first for the people to see. Then the fear will leave you; but if you do not do this, something very bad will happen to you.[22]

In order to perform his vision, Black Elk is aided by his fellow tribesmen and women. The event is public and everyone participates.

Before the Ceremony of the Horse is performed (in which each part in the story of the vision is acted out in elaborate detail), Black Elk is summoned to the tribal elders and asked to repeat the songs he has learned in his vision. These songs were the means by which Black Elk would summon his special powers. After the ceremony of the horse was performed, Black Elk was released finally from his great fears. He was accepted by the other medicine men into their society, and he set about curing the illnesses of fellow tribesmen and women. Like other Sioux shamans, Black Elk continued to augment his powers through additional vision quests and dreams, and he remained a recognized holy man until his death.[23]

Shamanic Initiation Analyzed

If we analyze the experience of Black Elk closely, the three phases of shamanic initiation reveal themselves. The preliminal or separation phase is always a phase of deep personal crisis, what Eliade refers to as initiatory illness.[24] The transitional or liminal phase is the trance or dream experience, the ecstatic journey. The postliminal or phase of incorporation is the transaction and affirmation of healing power. In this final phase the mythmaking aspects of initiation become manifest.

The distinguishing features of the first two phases, those of initiatory illness and of trance experience, are the characteristics

which serve to differentiate shamanic initiations from other kinds of initiation. The two phases are, in fact, intimately related to each other in that the liminal experience is actually an outcome of the preliminal crisis. Initiatory illness culminates in initiatory death.

Shamanic neophytes evidence a consistent tendency to isolate themselves from usual communal activities and to behave rather strangely. "The candidate becomes meditative, seeks solitude, sleeps a great deal, seems absent-minded, has prophetic dreams and sometimes seizures."[25] (Clearly these "symptoms" are related to the trance they are intended to induce.) Even within their own cultures, shamanic neophytes are regarded as psychologically abnormal at times.

> The future shaman sometimes takes a risk of being mistaken for a "madman" - that is often the case among the Malays - but in reality his "madness" fulfills a mystic function: it reveals certain aspects of reality to him that are inaccessible to other mortals, and it is only after having experienced and entered into these hidden dimensions of reality that the madman becomes a shaman.[26]

The rather bizarre nature of the neophyte's behavior, together with the attention paid to dream or hallucinatory material, has led some observers to assume that shamans are suffering from an actual mental illness such as a severe neurosis or psychosis.[27] The point of view these observers often take is that shamanism is actually a

culturally sanctioned form of adaptation made by disturbed or schizophrenic individuals in non-western societies. Eliade is adamant on this point; he states that the shaman does not suffer from "ordinary" mental illness, but from a sort of divine madness which is distinguished by its initiatory structure.[28] In other words, the dream and hallucinatory material of the shaman is entirely predictable and consistent with traditional initiatory symbolism. The more convincing approach that Eliade offers (I am not convinced that all mental illness cannot be induced to reveal "initiatory structure") is that shamans, once initiated demonstrate a control over their trances or seizures which an otherwise disintegrated personality would not be capable of.

> In the first place, it is not correct to say that shamans are, or must <u>always</u> be, neuropaths: on the contrary, a great many of them are perfectly sound in mind. Moreover, those who had previously been ill have become shamans just because they succeeded in getting well. Very often, when the vocation reveals itself in the course of an illness or an attack of epilepsy, the initiation is also a cure. The acquisition of the shamanic gifts indeed presupposes the resolution of the psychic crisis brought on by the first signs of this vocation. The initiation is manifested by - among other things - a new psychic integration.[29]

No doubt initiatory illnesses vary in degree from shaman to shaman. At the very least, they reflect the deep sense of crisis on an individual who is undergoing an identity change. It seems that some neophytes

were indeed seriously ill persons in the eyes of their own cultures, but those who survived to shamanhood were those who were able to recover.

It is clear from the material on shamanic initiatory illness that the process of initiatory regression described in Chapter II is not merely a symbolic one, but an actual regression experienced by the neophyte. This regression is qualified by the shaman's ability ultimately to control it. In Chapter IV, I will discuss in greater detail the psychoanalytic theory behind such a regression. However, the shamans have their own theory of regression, and they refer to it as an ecstatic journey. This journey, interestingly, has the same objective as the psychoanalytic experience of induced regression in understanding. While derived from a different conceptual universe, the shamanic description of regression in time is analogous to the psychoanalytic.

The ecstatic journey was believed by the shaman to be a very literal experience of flight wherein the shaman's soul left the body and travelled to a non-ordinary, non-human realm of existence.

> The content of these first ecstatic experiences, although comparatively rich, almost always includes one or more of the following themes: dismemberment of the body, followed by a renewal of the internal organs and viscera; ascent to the sky and dialogue with the gods or spirits; descent to the underworld and conversation with spirits and the souls of dead shamans; various revelations, both religious and shamanic (secrets of the profession). All these themes are clearly initiatory.[30]

The imagery of the flight recreates the themes of initiatory death and rebirth. Either to ascend to the heavens or descend to the underworld clearly implies a departure from ordinary temporality. As I have commented earlier, the interplay of flight and return, death and rebirth, time and timelessness, etc., all reflect the same basic initiatory theme of initiatory regression. Black Elk's journey provides an example of such regression.

The imagery of Black Elk's vision conforms easily to Eliade's description of the ecstatic journey. Not only does he fly up into the heavens and converse with spirits and ancestors, but he specifically experiences reversals in his sense of time.

> ...as I stared, he slowly changed, for he was growing backwards into youth, and when he had become a boy, I knew that he was myself...[31]

This point in Black Elk's vision best expresses the break with time which is the achievement of initiatory liminality. The imagery serves as a point of reference to the larger experience of timelessness embodied by the vision of trance itself. The very act of dreaming (regardless of its contents) constitutes if not a break with time then at least a distortion in time. Structurally, then, the experience of the vision is an experience in time distortion. (We will see that Freud's material reaffirms that the nature of this distortion is regressive as are dream contents themselves.) If this distortion is

implicit in dreaming, the specific imagery of Black Elk's vision makes the matter very explicit. It does so, as the above quote demonstrates, by describing specific distortions in time through the process of aging and regression. In this respect, it can be said that the dream explains itself; in effect, induces a consciousness or an understanding. This understanding is integral with the process of transformation which Black Elk subsequently undergoes. And it is this aspect of the dream which gives it its visionary quality. It begins with the experience of initiatory death and is later completed during the phase of incorporation when the ceremony of the horse is performed.

> Behold them yonder when the sun goes down
> the thunder beings. You shall see, and have
> from them my power; and they shall take you
> to the high and lonely center of the earth
> that you may see; even to the place where the
> sun continually shines. They shall take you
> there to understand.[32]

We have pointed out that the shaman, once initiation is complete, has control over his or her madness. This control is the demonstrated outcome of the shaman's achievement of enlightenment, and constitutes a process of healing.

> ...he is above all, a sick man who has been
> cured, who has succeeded in curing himself.[33]

A significant aspect of the shaman's experience of vision is not only

that it liberates him and empowers him, but that it does so because the understanding the shaman has achieved has been grasped within a comprehensible conceptual framework which can then be communicated. To some extent, this aspect presents a paradox, because the essential nature of the shaman's flight is not rational in the usual sense. The flight itself, which is achieved through trance, suggests a surrender or controlled suspension of total consciousness. The experience of initiatory death is "lived through" by the shaman with a deeper part of his or her being. Because by definition the shaman's experience evolves into one of self-mastery, both rational and non-rational processes are clearly at work. The expectation of the shaman's self-mastery is that it implies a further, complete mastery of the conceptual universe within which that achievement took place.

> ...their psychopathic experience has a theoretical content. For if they have cured themselves and are able to cure others, it is, among other things, because they know the mechanism, or rather the theory of illness.[34]

Once this insight has been achieved, it remains for the shaman to give evidence of this new mastery. This demonstration occurs during the phase of incorporation. The newly transformed being is integrated into a society which now recognizes that transformation. At this point, the awareness which has hitherto been an internal phenomenon becomes a socially acknowledged power. This transaction is consummated

through a process of communicating the shaman's mastery of his or her experience. The neophyte communicates to the tribal elders, or to the tribe itself, the history of what has been experienced and learned during the initiatory journey. This recounting of the initiatory history is the mythmaking aspect of the total process. The paradox of mythtelling is that it recapitulates regression while making it contemporaneous through the act of speech, a social act. Through myth, the experience is given form by the neophyte and transmitted socially. Mythmaking therefore accomplishes many functions at once, including the transaction of power. This power is the social affirmation of the transformation experienced. The implication of mythmaking for the experience of healing emerges more clearly. If initiation, as Eliade suggests, is in its transforming aspect a process of healing, and if mythmaking - in that it serves both as the description of that initiation and as a necessary constituent in its successful conclusion - implies the experience of initiation in its very definition, then it follows that mythmaking is intimately connected to the healing experience.

Black Elk communicated his vision by performing the ceremony of the horse with and for his tribe. When this ritual was completed, he was relieved of his fears, i.e., healed. This healing, because it was recognized and sanctioned, empowered him to subsequently heal others. The sanction could not have been acquired, however, if the experience

had not been retold. The significance of this retelling is underscored by the elder shaman who tells Black Elk that not only must he perform this vision for people to see, but also if he does not, "something very bad will happen" - presumably he sill remain ill and fearful. This aspect of Black Elk's transformation makes it clear that mastery of initiatory vision does not precede but is actually achieved through the process of communication itself. The importance of communication, specifically mythtelling, to healing has been corroborated by Eliade.

> In some widely dissimilar cultures the cosmogonic myth is re-enacted...to cure an illness...We can easily see why: by making the patient symbolically "return to the past" he was rendered contemporary with the Creation, he lived again in the initial plenitude of being...And such a return to the "beginning" is rendered possible by the patient's own memory. The cosmogonic myth is recited before him and for him; it is the sick man who, by recollecting one after another the episodes of the myth, relives them, and therefore becomes contemporary with them. The function of memory is not to conserve the memory of the primordial myth, but to transport the patient to where that event is in process of accomplishment...[35]

Shamanic initiation provides a model for understanding the relationship between training and construction of reality, or initiation and mythmaking. Furthermore, shamanic initiation provides a framework for understanding the relationship between mythmaking and healing. As the shaman constructs cosmic myth, s/he becomes healed and, in being healed, becomes powerful. In this fashion, the shaman follows the premise that in order to heal one must first be healed.

CHAPTER III - FOOTNOTES

1. Eliade, Shamanism (Princeton, 1972) 4, 13ff.

2. Ibid., 29.

3. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries (New York, 1960) 161.

4. Ibid., 63.

5. Eliade, Rites and Symbols of Initiation (New York, 1958) 87.

6. Ibid.

7. Erikson, E., Childhood and Society (New York, 1963).

8. The Sun Dance, the most sacred of Sioux religious ceremonies, is a ritual dance wherein the dancers subject themselves to physical mortification. The flesh of the chest and back is pierced with leather thongs which are tied to a pole and then pulled on by the dancers. This ordeal culminates in a trance, achieved in part from the effects of the mortification and in additional measure by gazing into the sun. The individual who survives this painful experience with bravery may achieve the status of a shaman if the other traditional aspects of shamanic initiation have also been achieved.

9. Hassrick, Roual, The Sioux (Norman, 1964) 288, 289.

10. Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks (New York, 1972).

11. Ibid., 15.

12. Ibid., 16.

13. Ibid., 18.

14. Ibid., 19.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 21, 22. Also Hassrick, op. cit., for discussion of Dream of Thunder Beings.

17. Ibid., 23.

18. Ibid., 25.

19. Ibid., 36.

20. Ibid., 41.

21. Ibid., 134.

22. Ibid., 135.

23. Ibid., 164-172. Discussion of Black Elk's healings.

24. Eliade, Shamanism, 14ff, 23ff, 33ff.

25. Ibid., 35.

26. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, 80.

27. Silverman, Julian, "Shamans and Acute Schizophrenia" in American Anthropologist (1967) 69:21-31.

28. Eliade, Shamanism, 14.

29. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, 77.

30. Eliade, Shamanism, 11.

31. Neihardt, op. cit., 25.

32. Ibid., 21, 22.

33. Eliade, Shamanism, 27.

34. Ibid., 31.

35. Eliade, Myths, Dreams and Mysteries, 48.

C H A P T E R IV

PSYCHOANALYTIC MYTHMAKING

This chapter will explore Sigmund Freud's experience in self-analysis within the context of a shamanic initiation. Psychoanalysis assumes that one can only become an effective psychoanalytic practitioner by first undergoing analysis oneself. Therefore, to be trained as a psychoanalyst, one must undergo analysis as a part of training. An examination of Freud's own self-analysis reveals the same unity of healing, mythmaking, initiation, and power which is achieved by the shaman. I do not consider it wise to force Freud's experience into the mold of the shaman, although I have used this model to develop a discussion of Freud's model. Certain aspects of both experiences provide interesting analogies to each other. On the whole, the shamanic model provides us with a tool for examining the initiatory aspects of Freud's experience which may have bearing on the experience of mental health practitioners in general.

For Freud, the period of 1897 - 1900 followed the pattern of isolation familiar to the lonely neophyte shaman. During this period, the self-analysis became Freud's central preoccupation. It was a time of deep personal crisis as well as extraordinary creativity. Ernest Jones notes that, "For three or four years the neurotic suffering and dependence actually increased in intensity." Two important, specific

aspects of the analysis which served to provide form to what as often as not proved to be a chaotic and unpredictable process were Freud's famous correspondence with Fliess and his writing of The Interpretation of Dreams. Both activities provided concrete avenues of expression for the extraordinary experiences and insights which Freud was undertaking at the time. The significant function of the correspondence to provide what in analytic terms is known as the tranference (in shamanic terms the social witness) has been developed and documented by Max Schur, Freud's personal physician.[2]

It was expected of shamans that their initiation would provide them with a cultural theory of illness. The work which grew directly out of Freud's first (initiatory) experience of self-analysis (he continued the analysis all his life) was also the work which provided the major cornerstone of Freud's subsequent theoretical developments. One could say that the initial vision, vividly referred to by Freud as "the outline of Lucifor-Amor coming into sight at the darkest center,"[3] was achieved in these three or four convulsive years and that the following forty or so were spent in the continual refinement and elaboration of those first revelations, just, for example, as the later essays on the Metapsychology trace their roots to Chapter VII of The Interpretation of Dreams (1900) and to The Project for A Scientific Psychology (1895).

I will pursue the discussion of Freud's self-analysis from the point of view of its shamanic components. These components have been generally organized into three parts: the state of deep personal crisis experienced (initiatory illness), the dream or trance experience (ecstatic journey), and the affirmation of healing power (myth-making and social witness). Since all of these processes overlap and even occur simultaneously, it is worth noting that the divisions are somewhat arbitrary.

Initiatory Illness

The date of commencement of Freud's self-analysis has been set during the summer of 1897, although it may have begun before.[4] Freud began his problem-solving approach through sporadic scrutiny of his own most personal experiences. That the effort had become a systematic endeavor by 1897 is revealed in a letter written to Fliess on August 14, 1897. Freud refers not only to the analysis, but also to the neurosis it is directed at.

> After a spell of good spirits here I am now having a fit of gloom. The chief patient I am busy with is myself. My little hysteria, which was much intensified by work, has yielded one stage further. The rest still sticks. That is the first reason for my mood. This analysis is harder than any other. It is also the thing that paralyses the power of writing down and communicating what so far I have learned. But I believe it has got to be done and is a necessary stage in my work.[5]

Perhaps the most inclusive observation that could be made of Freud's

psyche at this time is of the extremes to which it subjected him. He wrote Fliess repeatedly of his intense sense of isolation, beginning a good two years before the systematic analysis and continuing throughout this period. On October 8, 1895, Freud wrote, "I am alone with my mind, in which so much is stirring . . . In short, I am a recluse."[6] This isolation was often deepened by the innumerable periods of stagnation which punctuated the "swing of discovery"[7] and its accompanying elation.

> On stagnant days such as yesterday and today everything inside me is stagnant and terribly lonely. I cannot talk about it to anyone, and I cannot force myself to work, as other workers can. I have to wait until things move inside me and I experience them. And so I often dream whole days away.[8]

This isolation, however, he could apparently endure. For some relief, he had Fliess. He also had his daily work with his patients and support of his family life. For greater compensation, he had his productivity when it finally occurred. And whenever Freud had a breakthrough, his spirit would swing to the affirmative, become almost exultant. He understood the necessity of this daemonic to his creative process and referred to it as his tyrant.

> ...a man like me cannot live without a hobby-horse, a consuming passion - in Schiller's words a tyrant. I have found my tyrant, and in his service I know no limits. My tyrant is psychology; it has always been my distant beckoning goal and now, since I have hit on the neuroses, it has come so much the nearer.[9]

Here we find a clue to what Freud understood about his overwhelming passion. It was precisely his neurosis, his "hobby-horse" (he referred often to his process also as "my hysteria"), which provided him with the relentless drive for insight which ultimately rewarded him. Perhaps his most concise description of this process occurs in letter #72, October 27, 1897.

> As for myself, I have nothing to tell you except about my analysis, which I think will be the most interesting thing about me for you too. Business is hopelessly bad, it is so in general, right up to the very top of the tree, so I am living only for "inner" work. It gets hold of me and hauls me through the past in rapid association of ideas; and my mood changes like the landscape seen by a traveller from a train; ...some sad secrets of life are being traced back to their first roots, the humble origins of much pride and precedence are being laid bare...[10]

From early in his letters (1895), Freud gives evidence of his attention to his dreams. Although the significance of dreams and his intention to understand them are an early theme of the letters, their role becomes increasingly central after the self-analysis has been conscientiously undertaken. From the October 3, 1897 letter, one might even be led to conclude that the two processes, self-analysis and dream interpretation, had become synonymous.

> Outwardly very little is happening to me, but inside something very interesting is happening. For the last four days my self-analysis

> which I regard as indispensable for clearing up the whole problem, has been making progress in dreams and yielding the most valuable conclusions and evidence. At certain points I have the impression of having come to the end, and so far I have always known where the next night of dreams would continue.[11]

Up to and throughout this time (1897), Freud's considerable creative energies (he writes to Fliess of working twelve hour days), as intense and unpredictable as he may have found them to be, were consistently divided between the self-analysis (the dream interpretation), his patients (of whom there were too few, he complained to Fliess), and of course the correspondence. The latter activity, as previously noted, served two very important functions for Freud. It provided the context of a relationship for Freud's critical experience in self-analysis. It additionally enabled him to write about this experience. The importance of the writing is significant to the shamanic aspect of Freud's experience and was eventually underscored by the project of the "dream book". Before proceeding to this aspect of Freud's accomplishment, let us attempt a deeper understanding of the "ecstatic" nature of his experience as we have just described it. In order to do so, we turn now to the theory itself which Freud developed through his experience and comprehensively elaborated in The Interpretation of Dreams.

Ecstatic Journey

Little imagination is required to picture Freud's experience in self-analysis as a kind of journey. The letters to Fliess reveal that this journey was a return to childhood. Freud sought to understand himself by retrieving and understanding his earliest experiences. He elicited through analysis of dream material long-buried memories of childhood which he considered causal events in the disposition of his current psychic functioning. "The aim seems to be to hark back to primal scenes," he wrote Fliess on May 2, 1897.[12] Through persistent exploration of infantile memories, Freud sought to uncover the origins of his neurosis. Once he achieved the understanding he sought, he would then be able to generalize his insights into theories of illness and healing which applied to universal mental processes. By gaining mastery of his own processes, he would develop transferable powers of healing.

Dreams, he discovered, were in fact coded signals from the unconscious of infantile wish impulses which might now become available, through interpretation, to consciousness. That Freud sought to retrieve his childhood through his dreams easily places him in the tradition of shamans. Because Freud's "journey" was conducted by the trance-like process of free association, his journey resembles the ecstatic. Freud visited another realm of experience (his unconscious infantile past) to

which corresponds to consciousness (Pcpt.-Cs. or perceptual consciousness).

> ...the outermost superficial portion of the mental apparatus, which we describe as the system Perceptual-conscious. This system is turned towards the external world, it is the medium for the perceptions arising thence, and during its functioning the phenomenon of consciousness arises in it. It is the sense organ of the entire apparatus; moreover it is receptive not only to excitations from outside but also from those arising from the interior of the mind.[13]

This apparatus records internal as well as external stimuli experienced by the organism. Sense impressions of these stimuli are permanently impressed on the psyche in the form of memory traces. Some memory traces remain available to consciousness and some do not. Those memories which are not available are repressed. The fact that the conscious mind cannot extract the contents of the unconscious mind at will, in fact does not even know what lies hidden in the unconscious, creates a barrier between conscious and unconscious processes. While this barrier is not impermeable, as the technique of psychoanalysis demonstrates, the retrieval of repressed fantasies occurs with great difficulty. Freud described repression as a dynamic unconscious process in the mind.

> This effortless and regular avoidance by the psychical process of the memory of anything that had once been distressing affords us the prototype and first example of psychical repression...[14]

I will not explore the theory of repression, which is quite complex, save to note that the concept includes an interaction (or conflict) of energy impulses which supply an ongoing tension to the boundary between unconscious and consciousness, ego and id.

> The kernel of the system Ucs consists of instinct-presentations whose aim is to discharge their cathexis; that is to say, they are wish-impulses. These instinctual impulses are corrdinate with one another, exist independently side by side, and are exempt from mutual contradiction.[15]

In addition to the conscious and unconscious systems, Freud further differentiated a aprt of the system unconscious which is latent, i.e. capable of becoming conscious. He referred to this system as the preconscious and distinguished it from the dynamic unconscious which contains the repressed.[16] Impressions which exist in the preconscious are linked to verbal ideas of those impressions, whereas impressions retained in the dynamic unconscious are those of instinct presentations or memory traces of concrete ideas (as opposed to verbal ideas).

Within this theoretical context, the psychoanalytic neophyte attempts to achieve the insight which will be the creation of a personal myth. This mythmaking process is made possible also by a return in time. The origins of the personal cosmos, according to Freud, are contained in the unconscious. Personal history is constructed out of experiences which have been stored in the memory systems. These

memories comprise Freud's concept of immortality: that the one indelibly fixed truth about ourselves is our personal history.

> Indeed it is a prominent feature of unconscious processes that they are indestructible. In the unconscious nothing can be brought to an end, nothing is past or forgotten.[17]

> There is nothing in the id that corresponds to the idea of time; there is no recognition of the passage of time, and - a thing that is most remarkable and awaits consideration in philosophical thought - no alteration in its mental processes is produced by the passage of time. Wishful impulses which have never passed beyond the id, but impressions, too, which have been sunk into the id by repression, are virtually immortal; after the passage of decades they behave as though they had just occurred.[18]

While understanding about personal history may change in the process of analysis, the history as it was initially experienced and recorded by memory traces will not. The contents of the unconscious provide an external record of the past. To gain access to the unconscious is to enter a paradox of time, to retrieve the immortal contents of the id into present consciousness. These contents emerge, however, not as they reside in the id but as they are transformed by the preconscious into consciousness. The history which emerges is indeed a reconstruction of reality, but unlike the objective reality attributed to archaic myth the psychoanalytic myth expresses a subjective reality.

> It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all <u>from</u> our childhood; memories

> relating to our childhood may be all that we possess. Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, emerge; they were formed at that time.[19]

Freud's concept for this mythical return is also regression. Since Freud believed that our earliest perceptual experiences and the fantasies associated with them determined the structure of neurosis, for any analysis to succeed in its outcome, it must achieve a regression - and a working back from the regression - by the patient to the origin of illness. The regression is achieved by the revival and reconstruction of infantile experiences. That Freud suffered an exacerbation of his neurosis during his self-analysis was a requirement of that analysis; it was the hard evidence that regression was achieved. The process of insight which he undertook must be further qualified in this respect. Not only is insight the process of achieving a dynamic interpenetration of conscious and unconscious processes, it is a process which can only be achieved through regression.

This phenomenon is equally true for both immediate and more far-reaching insights. The far-reaching insight into the nature of Freud's personal history and neurotic etiology was achieved through the cumulative process of the prolonged, induced regression of self-analysis. The more immediate insights, which provided the daily, smaller constituents of

this endeavor, are also the product of regressive experiences.

> Unconscious processes can only be observed by us under the conditions of dreaming and neurosis; that is to say, when the processes of the higher system preconscious revert to an earlier level by a certain process of degradation (regression).[20]

These regressions are inherent in the structure of both free association and dreams. The former is a process of moving from the conscious to the unconscious mind; the latter begins with the unconscious. Dreams and the process of their interpretation provide microcosmic daily "flights" for the dreamer: a prototype for the more encompassing experience of analysis. Freud discovered in dreams the doorway to his own personal prehistory and also to that of mankind.

> ...dreaming is on the whole an example of regression to the dreamer's earliest condition, a revival of his childhood, of the instinctual impulses which dominated it and of the methods of expression which were then available to him. Behind this childhood of the individual we are promised a picture of a phylogenetic childhood - a picture of the development of the human race, of which the individual's development is in fact an abbreviated recapitulation influenced by the chance circumstances of life. We can guess how much to the point is Nietszche's assertion that in dreams "some primaeval relic of humanity is at word which we can now scarcely reach any longer by a direct path"; and we may expect that the analysis of dreams will lead us to a knowledge of man's archaic heritage, of what is physically innate in him. Dreams and neuroses seem to have preserved more mental antiquities than we could have imagined possible; so that

> psychoanalysis may claim a high place among the sciences which are concerned with the reconstruction of the earliest and most obscure periods of the beginnings of the human race.[21]

The psychoanalytic concept of regression is a complex process which Freud examined from three perspectives. Topographical regression refers to a spatial, bodily conceptualization of the mental process turning backwards whereby the mind retrieves the sensory image which underlies a particular idea. Temporal regression refers to the historical nature of the information retrieved by the memory systems. Formal regression refers to the fact that the memories retrieved are experienced in more or less sensory (hallucinatory) rather than cognitive forms: ideas are represented, for the most part, by images in dream. Thus as the individual attempts to reach back into pre-historical experience (Freud defines prehistory as the years from one to three),[22] his or her thinking on the material becomes increasingly less conceptual and more perceptual.

> Three kinds of regression are thus to be distinguished: a) <u>topographical</u> regression, in the sense of the schematic picture of the systems which we have explained above; b) <u>temporal</u> regression, in so far as what is in question is a harking back to older psychical structures; and c) <u>formal</u> regression where primitive methods of expression and representation take the place of the usual ones. All these three kinds of regression are, however, one at bottom and occur together as a rule; for what is older in time is more primitive in form and in psychical topography lies nearer to the perceptual end.[23]

These earliest memory traces provide many of the sense images which, when structured symbolically by the processes of condensation and displacement, comprise the primary process.[24] It is only later in the thinking process that increasingly abstract ideas and logical, interconnecting links are associated to these images or presentation. This is the development of the secondary process.[25] Therefore, earliest experiences cannot be simply "rethought", although thinking is not abandoned in their recall, but must also be "refelt".

It is now possible to understand why insights can only be achieved through a process of experiencing (over and beyond a conceptual process), because of the nature of regression. It can also be understood why dreams are hallucinatory in their formal aspect. Freud's ecstatic journey, at its core, was an intense emotional experience which obliterated time through the purposeful suspension of consciousness. Through regression, he unlocked the door of repression to the history in his unconscious. He did so, however, through a process of controlled regression which developed later into the concept of regression in the service of the ego.

Essentially what this means is that regression is an intentionally induced phenomenon in analysis (although regressive characteristics may already be present in neurotic symptomatology prior to the initiation of treatment) and is always to some degree monitored by the ego. Regression of this kind is contrasted to that of psychotic dissociation

wherein the ego's grast on reality is severely impaired by primary process ideation. While the ego is weakened in the process of analysis and subject to distortions, it can presumably remain sufficiently intact as to not become completely overwhelmed. Control of regression in analysis is achieved through the "analytic pact" wherein the ego of the analyst supplies necessary direction and support to the weakened ego of the analysand.

> The ego is weakened by the internal conflict and we must go to its help. The position is like that in a civil war which has to be decided by the assistance of any ally from outside. The analytic physician and the patient's weakened ego, basing themselves on the real external world, have to band themselves together into a party against the enemies, the instinctual demands of the id and the conscientious demands of the superego. We form a pact with each other. The sick ego promises us the most complete candour- promises, that is, to put at our disposal all the material which its self-perception yields it; we assure the patient of the strictest discretion and place at his service our experience in interpreting material that has been influenced by the unconscious. Our knowledge is to make up for his ignorance and to give his ego back its mastery over lost provinces of his mental life. This pact constitutes the analytic situation.[26]

In Freud's case, he had no analyst. However, he depended heavily during the period of his self-analysis on the support of Fliess, with whom he carried on a detailed evaluation of his emerging theories and insights, much as the analysand does with the analyst. In the case of

the shaman, this role is supplied by a master shaman and by the cultural tradition of shamans which makes available to the neophyte the necessary directive to enable the structuring of initiatory experience.

If insight is the product of regression, it equally is the product of a return from regression. Eliade has argued that the power of the shamans lies in the fact that they know how to return from regression and communicate their experiences, just as they can also enter and exit their trances at will. The additional dimension which Freud supplies to these conditions of insight and power is his intrapsychic explanation of how the process of return is the process of communication.

My discussion of insight so far has taken us to the point where earliest experiences are recalled through the revival of sensory images. This is the process of regression. Contact is made with primary processes. If, however, these unconscious processes are to be made conscious, the image must be translated into a word, a verbal idea. The conversion of image into word occurs in the system Freud described as preconscious. This system refers to that portion of unconscious processes or fantasies which may become accessible to consciousness. It is also the portion of the mind which reverses the work of repression by supplying the crucial ideational links.

> The question, "How does a thing become conscious?" would thus be more advantageously stated: "How does

> a thing become preconscious?" And the answer would be: "Through becoming connected with the word-presentations corresponding to it."[27]

For unconscious ideas, words are the gate to consciousness. An insight cannot be "known" unless it can be articulated. While insight is achieved through the retrieval of memory, memories are retrieved through verbal activity. Freud described this process as follows in the 1915 essay on "The Unconscious",

> What we could permissably call the conscious idea of the object can now be split up into the idea of the word (verbal idea) and the idea of the thing (concrete idea); the latter consists in the cathexis, if not of the direct memory images of the thing, at least of remoter memory traces derived from these. It strikes us all at once that now we know what is the difference between a conscious and an unconscious idea... the conscious idea comprises the concrete idea plus the verbal idea corresponding to it, whilst the unconscious is that of the thing alone. The system Ucs contains the thing-cathexes of the objects, the first and true object cathexes; the system Pcs originates in a hypercathexis of this concrete idea by a linking-up of it with the verbal ideas of the words corresponding to it. It is such hypercathexes, we may suppose, that bring about higher organization in the mind and make it possible for the primary process to be succeeded by the secondary process which dominates Pcs. Now, too, we are in a position to state precisely what it is that repression denies to the rejected idea in the transference neurosis - namely, translation of the idea into words, which are to remain attached to the object. The idea which is not put into words or the mental act which has not received hypercathexis then remains in the unconscious in a state of repression.[28]

Verbalization becomes the process of return from regression as it releases repressed fantasy. The contents of the repressed unconscious gain access to consciousness through word presentations. Memory traces of instinct presentations in the unconscious can only be retrieved by consciousness when they are linked to corresponding word presentations. The "idea of the thing" can only become manifest through its verbal idea. For this reason, insight is only completed in consciousness when it is verbalized.

The critical role of words in the functioning of the mental apparatus is now clear, as is the reason why the act of speaking itself is central to the process of psychoanalysis. Memory and speech are irrevocably linked in such a way that insight is only achieved as it is articulated. This rendering of insight into verbal form, as I noted in the last chapter, constitutes a reentry of the neophyte into time. The shaman experienced this relationship to time and timelessness both through the symbolism of his dreams and their witnessed reenactment. Freud embedded this experience in his theory; if eternity is found in the system unconscious, the concept of time originates in consciousness.

> The relation to time, which is so hard to describe, is also introduced into the ego by the perceptual system; it can scarcely be doubted that the mode of operation of that system is what provides the origin of the idea of time.[29]

The cycle of initiatory death and rebirth completes itself for the

psychoanalytic neophyte in the same manner it does for the shamanic. The regressive character of initiatory death converts itself into a visionary rebirth through the telling of a history. As this regression was initiated by consciousness, it is also transformed by it. The relationship between conscious and unconscious remains dynamic throughout. Infantile material retrieved from the unconscious is interpreted by the conscious mind through verbal concepts and thereby given new form. The act of retrieving and interpreting this material constitutes its transformation. The personal myth now rendered in analysis to the analyst is an outward expression of an inner transformation. This personal mythmaking process fulfills Eliade's definition of myth: it embodies a paradox of time where immortality is achieved in temporal form. The analytic neophyte, through mythtelling, creates her/his identity. A legend of self is told which, because it is told for the first time, is a birth of the legendary self. This is the new self of the initiate which defines new powers.

Mythmaking and Social Witness

My discussion of shamanism has introduced the difficult matter of cure and healing. An interesting distinction has been made by Philip Rieff, who argues that "cure is a religious category" and that Freud, the atheist, sought rather to increase the power of the individual and therefore the freedom to choose.[30] Freud makes it clear in The Future

of an Illusion that he considers these to be the objectives of scientific endeavor.

> We believe that it is possible for scientific work to gain some knowledge about the reality of the world, by means of which we can increase our power and in accordance with which we can arrange our life.[31]

This argument is appropriate to my discussion because it strikes at the core difference between shamans and psychoanalysts: that shamans consider their powers religious while analysts deem their powers scientifically based. In each case, however, the concept of power applies where healing may or may not. While there may be analysands who consider the nature of their experience in analysis to be religious, society recognizes psychoanalysis in the province of the medical sciences (a designation Freud himself found unfortunate, although he strove to render his theory "scientific"). If healing is a term which does not always apply comfortably to both shamanic and psychoanalytic experiences (psychoanalysts may question the shamans and others have questioned the psychoanalysts), then power is a term which does. From my point of view, the notion of power illuminates the meaning of healing.

Both shamans and psychoanalysts, once they have rendered a myth, are considered "healed", as are their patients, and some patients go on to become shamans and analysts also. Healing in this context may

be evaluated as an increase in personal power. It also implies a defining of personal (subjective) reality. The factor which determines whose experience of healing may be transmuted into the power to heal others is society. Personal power is promoted into social power via social sanctions. Up to a point, the personal healing experience of the ordinary analysand and the future analyst are one and the same. The only distinguishing feature I can find (apart from the necessity to state one's intent to become a healer and to be eventually recognized by a sanctioned group of healers) is that the analyst in training analyzes the counter-transference phenomenon as well as the transference.

The theory of the transference, together with the analytic pact from which it develops, is the point at which the technique of psychoanalysis incorporates social relations into its structure of transformation. Initiation rites cannot occur outside of a social context. The transformation which occurs on a Sioux Vision Quest or a training analyst's couch is invisible. But the neophyte is required to give evidence of his/her experience to a specially sanctioned representative of society who is previously initiated in the same mode of consciousness. The myth experienced by the neophyte must match the accepted social myth: the objective

assured of that particular form of consciousness (reality) in a society, and this assurance constitutes the transference of powers. Shamanic flight is not completed by the neophyte until it has been recounted to

a shamanic elder. However, this recounting provides more than just witness to the neophyte's myth. Just as Black Elk was required to perform his dream in an elaborate ceremony for his tribesmen and women, the transference relationship provides a context for the reenactment of the neophyte's personal myth. It is the structure onto which the regression is projected.

> We know that one of the important ingredients of every analysis is the "transference." The analysand develops a very special relationship to the analyst, which reflects all his intense relationships to important figures of the past, as, for instance, parents and siblings. A transference relationship is therefore essentially a repetition of the past...[32]

As the transference is worked through in analysis by analyst and patient, the personal myth becomes the social product of the transference relationship. This special relationship, as Schur has argued, was not absent from Freud's self-analysis. The relationship with Fliess provided a structure without which Freud's accomplishment might not have been achieved. This is a matter for speculation. However, it can certainly be argued that Freud saw the necessity for such a relationship. He did not, finally, develop a manual for self-analysis. He rather helped to institutionalize the analyst-patient relationship. Freud was in the business of making powers and myths, and these are phenomena which only have meaning in a social context.

Where Freud did not enjoy the same quotient of witness provided by

daily meetings with an analyst, we find he compensated for this lack of presence by the available alternative of communication: writing. The role of the preconscious in the production of insight demonstrated the very crucial role words play in the act of memory and in the overall process of psychoanalysis. Therefore, I believe it is safe to conclude that Freud's voluminous writings were much more than a fortunate by-product of his discoveries. They were a crucial factor in the process of discovery itself. We may look upon his writings not just as the reporting of developed theories but as actual documents of the process of theorizing (or analyzing). The letters to Fliess fall easily into this category of documentation. It may equally be said of The Interpretation of Dreams (which Freud worked on as the self-analysis progressed) that it facilitated Freud's process as much as it reflected it. In the writing of the letters, Freud transcribed elements of his own personal myth. In the writing of the dream book, he gave society a larger myth about human nature itself. This is the final requirement of the shaman: that he or she relate the experience of personal myth to the broader consciousness of social myth. The expectation that a theory of illness be acquired implied that a theory of reality be understood. Freud, of course, is distinguished in this tradition in that he not only understood but authored a theory.

To become a psychoanalyst today, one is not required to write as Freud did or to invent a theory. However, a facility for social

mythmaking on a smaller scale is required. This form of mythmaking involves the understanding and articulation of the personal myth of other individuals and is equivalent to demonstrating theoretical understanding. The analyst in training is required to do more than undergo his or her own analysis. He or she is responsible at the same time for the analysis of other patients. Moreover, these analyses are simultaneously analyzed with training analysts. In this fashion, the neophyte analyst has his/her mythmaking powers observed, matched with social reality, and thus legitimized. This particular aspect of training psychoanalysts is classified as analysis of the counter-transference. If the patient makes myths about the analyst, so too does the analyst make myths about the patient. In this respect, the subjective use of reality in psychoanalysis is as plastic as its other concepts. Power, as it is negotiated by the ego, becomes a measure of this plasticity.

The complex arrangement of relationships described by the terms transference and countertransference and the accompanying questions of power which they imply have brought us to the problem of mythmaking and "objective" reality. We have stated that in order for the mythmaking process which occurs in individual analysis to be realized, a factor of social reality (rendered by social myth) must be introduced through the relationship of the transference. The social reality I refer to is created through the relationship of the individual with

other individuals and the social group of which they are members. In this respect, "objective" reality is created by social witness.

I have introduced the significance of the reality factor through a discussion of psychoanalytic technique - specifically the device of the transference. However, the relationship of reality to the id (system unconscious) also plays a critical role in psychoanalytic theory through the concept of the ego. As I have discussed psychoanalysis so far, I have concentrated primarily on the process of analyzing the contents of the unconscious. The term which Freud developed to encompass this aspect of analysis is "id analysis." Id analysis is differentiated from ego analysis. Both are integral parts of the whole activity of psychoanalysis. Understanding of the ego is important to my discussion at this point because the ego is the organism's seat of control: it serves as intermediary between id and reality, between impulse and function.[33]

Freud defined the ego as "that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of the perceptual conscious."[34] The ego's functions are complex. It serves as a kind of mediating term between conscious and unconscious processes. While conscious and unconscious are by definition antithetical, the ego nevertheless embraces both. The ego "represents what may be called reason and common sense,"[35] yet "it has borrowed its energies from the id."[36] In fact, the ego is the one psychical agency

which bears a relation to all other facets of the mental apparatus, with the exception of the repressed, to which it has indirect access.

> After this clarifying of the relations between external and internal perception and the superficial system Pcpt.-Cs., we can go on to work out our idea of the ego. It starts out, as we see, embracing the Pcs., which is adjacent to the mnemic residues... But as we have learnt, the ego is also unconscious.[37]

> But the repressed merges into the id as well, and is merely a part of it. The repressed is only cut off sharply from the ego by the resistances of repression; it can communicate with the ego through the id.[38]

The ego, if it cannot gain direct access to the id, can make contact through the activity of analysis, an ego function. This ability to access all of the systems of the mind ultimately enables the ego to function in a mediating capacity. This mediating capacity is known in psychoanalytic terminology as the synthesizing function of the ego, and it is precisely this capability of the ego which makes the experience of insight possible. Without the ego there would be small chance of directing consciousness and therefore embarking upon analysis. As a consequence of this ability to direct consciousness, not only towards external objectives but also inwardly in the relation to the other aspects of the mind, the ego, as mediator, can also function to synthesize the range of experiences it receives both from without and within.

> ...What distinguished the ego from the id quite especially is a tendency to synthesis in its contents, to a combination and unification in its mental processes which are totally lacking in the id.[39]

The ego, through its ability to observe, accomplishes this synthesis in the twofold manner distinguished, by analyzing itself and by analyzing the id.

> Our therapeutic work swings to and from during the treatment like a pendulum, analyzing now a fragment of the id, and now a fragment of the ego. In the one case our aim is to bring a part of the id into consciousness and in the other to correct something in the ego.[40]

The "something" in the ego which the ego strives to analyze and correct is the defense mechanism. The ego is structured, or defended, by mechanisms it develops to avoid potential danger (danger from id impulses, reality demands, or the punishing superego).[42] The defense mechanisms are behavioral manifestations of the repression of unconscious fantasies during the early period of the individual's life. Through the patterns of behavior they generate, the structure of the personality is determined. As the ego exercises "control over the approaches to motility,"[43] the defenses are the specific devices which determine the nature of this control. Analysis of the unconscious origins of the defenses (ego analysis) enables alteration in their structure (elimination of symptoms)... Self-thwarting defense mechanisms are (ideally) weakened by analysis of the repressions which support them. New memory traces are superimposed on the old which serve to reinforce the operation of more effective defenses. The ego's functioning is enhanced by

insight. This provides the individual with options in dealing with the environment. We may speculate that the altered behavior which is produced by the strengthened ego provokes a response from the individual's immediate society - in other words, the endowment of power. The ego is the special arbiter of this power.

The ego is the psychical agency which specifically undertakes to construct the personal myth which is the product of psychoanalysis. In its capacity as mythmaker, the ego, within the context of the therapeutic transference relationship, functions both to define personal reality and to bring that personal reality into congruence with "objective" social reality. As reality is defined through the rendering of myth, power is assumed by the individual ego. Thus in the ego, mythmaking and powermaking become interchangeable.

In these two last chapters, I have reviewed the process of regression and insight which is necessary to the creation of a myth, and the acquisision of power. In so doing, I have addressed two of the central concerns of this study: the psychoanalytic and shamanic constructions of reality within an initiatory or training context and the relationship of these constructions to transactions of personal and social power. I have also discussed the assumption underlying shamanic and psychoanalytic initiation that the power to heal is derived from the experience of healing the self of the healer. In the following chapter, I will

pursue further the complex and ambiguous nature of this reality-making process as it is expressed in the concept of liminality. In so doing, I hope to further develop the groundwork for my final conclusions about the rather vulnerable nature of the entire experience of psychoanalytic mythmaking.

CHAPTER IV - FOOTNOTES

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3. Freud, S., The Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess (New York, 1965), 323. (Letter #138, July 10, 1900)

4. Ibid., 30. According to letter #75, Freud's analysis began at this time. Both Schur and Kris dispute this, citing an earlier date.

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6. Ibid., 126. (Letter #29, August 8, 1895)

7. Ibid., 187. (Letter #55, January 11, 1897)

8. Ibid., 236. (Letter #77, December 3, 1897)

9. Ibid., 119. (Letter #24, May 25, 1895).

10. Ibid., 225. (Letter #72, October 27, 1897)

11. Ibid., 218, 219. (Letter #70, October 3, 1897)

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34. Freud, The Ego and the Id, 15.

35. Ibid.

36. Freud, New Introductory Lectures, 77.

37. Freud, The Ego and the Id, 13.

38. Ibid., 14.

39. Ibid., 76.

40. Freud, Therapy and Technique, 256.

41. Ibid.

42. I have avoided discussion of the superego as less relevant to this study than the other psychical agencies.

43. Freud, The Ego and the Id, 15.

CHAPTER V

LIMINALITY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

I have discussed in the foregoing chapters how mythmaking is the product of the liminal period of initiatory death. In this chapter, I will try to deal with the substance of liminal process as it relates to psychoanalytic mythmaking. Psychoanalytic myth, as I have defined it thus far, embraces paradox: it is constructed out of a dialogue between conscious and unconscious processes, between present and reconstructed past. As I discuss liminality in this chapter, I will show how it is developed from the concept of being on a boundary and how this idea suggests an approach to ambiguity and contradiction. Finally, I will try to show how the ego in analysis is liminal and how the ego's attempts to define reality (mythmaking) are integral with a consciousness of contradiction and ambiguity.

Drawing on van Gennep's teminology, I have referred to liminality as that phase of initiation which corresponds with initiatory death. Victor Turner has been responsible for the further development and usage of this term,[1] and has given considerable attention to what he refers to as the "sociocultural properties" of liminality.[2] Following van Gennep's line of thought, he focuses on the transitional nature of rites of passage (notably, rites of initiation). In so doing, he expands the concept in two ways which are useful to us. To begin with,

he defines liminality as a process concept, thereby giving it dynamic potential.

> ...I prefer to regard transition as a process, a becoming, and in the case of rites de passage, even a transformation.[3]

Additionally, Turner suggests that liminality is a multidimensional concept. As a "state of transition," liminality is an inclusive concept, capable of embracing "mental and emotional" states as well as physical, social, etc.[4] As an ethnologist, Turner's primary concern is the social attributes of his term, but as he develops the concept, it becomes clear that corresponding assumptions are also made about the inner nature of liminal personae. As I noted in Chapter II, the neophyte is expected to undergo a deep inner transformation in addition to the external manifestations.[5] Therefore, liminality takes on psychological dimensions as well as sociocultural ones. It is specifically the notion of a psychoanalytic liminality, over and beyond a purely social liminality, which I wish to develop in this chapter.

To be liminal, Turner says, is to be "interstructural."[6] The neophyte who is undergoing a rite of passage is no longer what he or she was and not yet what he or she is to become. These persons are "betwixt and between,"[7] not of their former status and not yet of the status they will achieve. They are outsiders to whom none of the usual (social) categories or classifications can be attributed. This

ambiguous state of "structural invisibility" captures precisely the essence of initiatory death and rebirth. In Turner's words:

> "Undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns."[8]

The point I would like to emphasize here is the convertability of initiatory symbols, as also pointed out by Eliade.

> ...initiatory death is often symbolized, for example, by darkness, by cosmic night, by the telluric womb, the hut, the belly of a monster. All these images express regression to a preformal state, to a latent mode of being... rather than total annihilation (in the sense in which, for example, a member of the modern societies conceives death). These images and symbols of ritual death are inextricably connected with germination, with embryology; they already indicate a new life in course of preparation.[9]

It is interesting to note how, by the principle of the economy (or parsimony) of symbolic reference, logically antithetical processes of death and growth, time and timelessness, may be represented by the same images, i.e. huts, tunnels, etc. As Turner notes, "The coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the peculiar unity of the liminal; that which is neither this nor that and yet is both."[10]

This "particular unity of the liminal" is the attribute which is of greatest interest to me, because it enables us to consider an

ongoing interaction of processes. This dynamic nature of the liminal is what makes the term particularly appropriate to the process of psychoanalysis. Before embarking on the liminal nature of that technique, however, we should pursue the properties of liminality somewhat further.

Turner refers, in the essay under consideration, to a 1966 work by Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger. In this book, Douglas makes a study of the relationship between pollution and social contradiction. Ideas of pollution, she holds, have been developed to express both anomaly and ambiguity.[11] She begins her argument by defining dirt as anomaly, a contradiction to the system of classification within which it is found, i.e. ketchup on a shirt is dirt because one is food and the other is clothing, the two not to be mixed. Ketchup on a plate, of course, is an acceptable category.

> If we can abstract pathogenicity and hygiene from our notion of dirt, we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt, there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity.[12]

If we continue to pursue Douglas' ideas of pollution, they will reveal a certain conceptual symmetry with those of liminality. Turner observes that liminal persons, socially anomalous, are indeed considered polluting by their cultures as one might expect.[13] Such anomalous persons are generally attributed very particular powers and dangers.[14] The precise kind of power Douglas refers to here is the power of an idea.

> ...ambiguous symbols can be used in ritual for the same ends as they are used in poetry and mythology, to enrich meaning or call our attention to other levels of existence. We shall see in the last chapter how ritual, by using symbols of anomaly, can incorporate evil and death along with life and goodness, into a simple, grand unifying pattern.[15]

In her last chapter, she further develops this theme.

> The dramatic combination of opposites is a psychologically satisfying theme full of scope for interpretation at varying levels. But at the same time any ritual which expresses the happy union of opposites is also an apt vehicle for essentially religious themes. The Lele pangolin cult is only one example of which many more could be cited, of cults which invite their initiates to turn round and confront the categories on which their whole surrounding culture has been built up and to recognize them for the fictive, man-made, arbitrary creations that they are.[16]

The accomplishment of the Lele Pangolin cult is no less than an archaic or primitive expression of metaphysical activity. Douglas theorizes that Lele worship of the Pangolin (scaly ant-eater) is a contemplation

of anomaly: "The pangolin was always spoken of as the most incredible monster of all..."[17] Its being contradicts all the most obvious animal categories. It is scaly like a fish, but it climbs trees. It is more like an egg-laying lizard than a mammal, yet it suckles its young."[18]

This awareness of anomaly, she concludes, implies an acute awareness of existence and an ability to speculate upon its absurdities and contradictions. "If they could choose among our philosophies, the one most congenial to the moments of that rite, the pangolin initiates would be primitive existentialists."[19] The function of the Pangolin cult serves not only to contemplate the meaning of life, but it does so on a level of relative sophistication - with a willingness to tolerate ambiguity.

> If they consistently shunned ambiguity they would commit themselves to division between ideal and reality. But they confront ambiguity in an extreme and concentrated form. They dare to grasp the pangolin and put it to ritual use, proclaiming that this has more power than any other rites. So the pangolin cult is capable of inspiring a profound meditation on the nature of purity and impurity and on the limitation on human contemplation of existence.[20]

Turner underscores this notion of a metaphysical activity at the heart of initiation in his discussion of the presentation of the sacra. Sacra are the "crux of liminality."[21] Literally, they are sacred objects, guarded with great secrecy during non-ceremonial times of year and then, with the accompaniment of cosmological and specific

initiatory instructions, carefully exhibited to the neophytes during the liminal period. The sacra themselves are instructional in nature, but Turner makes the point that their particular educational properties, which are secret, are to be differentiated from the cosmological and traditional forms of instruction as the latter are also available to the uninitiated.[22] From an analysis of the characteristically monstrous and disproportionate even bizarre appearance of the sacra (for instance, masks combining human and animal characteristics), Turner concludes that the sacra serve the same function as the pangolin of Douglas' study. Sacra, as he describes them, express anomaly.

> When one examines the masks, costumes, figurines, and such displayed in initiation situations, one is often struck, as I have been when observing Ndembu masks in circumcision and funerary rites, by the way in which certain natural and cultural features are represented as disproportionately large or small. A head, nose, or tiny phallus, a hoe, bow, or meal mortar are represented as huge or tiny by comparison with features of their context which retain their normal size.[23]

Turner argues that "the point of this exaggeration amounting sometimes to caricature" is that it amounts to a "primordial mode of abstraction."

Symbols, Turner and Douglas agree, are employed by primitive cultures to embody concepts of ambiguity and complexity. The sacra are exhibited at the central moment of the liminal passage and serve to provoke the deep awareness which will transform the neophyte, accomplish

what I have described as initiatory death. During the course of the shaman's ecstatic journey, the culminating experience of heightened awareness is the ability the neophyte achieves to visualize his or her own skeleton.

> ...the contemplation of his own skeleton (is) a spiritual exercise of great importance in Eskimo shamanism, but which is also found in Central Asia and in Indo-Tibetan Tantrism. The ability to see oneself as a skeleton implies, evidently, the symbolism of death and resurrection; for...the "reduction to a skeleton" constitutes, for the hunting peoples, a symbolico-ritual complex centered in the notion of life as perpetual renewal... Rasmussen reports of it: "Although no shaman can explain how or why, he can, nevertheless by the power that his thought receives from the supernatural, divest his body of flesh and blood, so that nothing of it remains but the bones. He then has to name all the parts of his body, mentioning each bone by name..."[24]

This experience of seeing into the underlying structure of one's own body is another example of the contemplation of a contradiction, and in this fashion it is the counterpart of the meditation of the sacra.

Having now remarked upon the similarities in analysis shared by Turner and Douglas, I would like to make a further observation. It seems to me that Douglas' discussion of the metaphysical implications of contradiction and anomaly is somehow more cogent. It strikes one immediately that much of her contribution is made through her treatment of the idea of a boundary. Interestingly, the concept of a

boundary served as the origin for the concept of liminality. Van Gennep informed us that a limen was a doorpost or a threshold and that to be liminal was that state of being on the threshold or boundary.[25] It is precisely this concept of the boundary which Turner has omitted in his development of the concept of liminality. Douglas, however, who makes only an indirect allusion to liminality, although she well describes its attributes, resurrects the concept of the boundary. In so doing, she resupplies the topographical dimension to the concept of liminality which van Gennep first developed and Turner later omitted. She gives us a map for liminality which not only serves to expand that concept but which also facilitates the application of liminality to Freud's topography.

The idea of a boundary is initially implicit in Douglas' thesis and eventually explicit. Her early discussion of pollution, in which she describes the relationship between anomaly and classificatory systems, that the presence of one implies the other, provides the conceptual soil for the evolution of a boundary. The theoretical link from anomaly to boundary has been provided by the sociology of deviance, where anomalous behavior and social boundaries are attributed the function of defining each other.[26] Simply reformulated, if what is not served to define what is, then one can say an anomaly serves to set the boundaries of any classification. Once anomalous differentiation is achieved and that boundary is determined, what was formerly

anomalous becomes yet another category. (Certainly "anomaly" is itself a category.) At the same time anomaly defines classification, classification defines anomaly. A reciprocity is thus established.

The challenge to our conceptual process, she suggests, is to see past our natural proclivity to classify and to understand the inherently contradictory relationship between classificatory systems. To do so is to recover the power of ambiguity, to discover the added dimension of what is not in all that is. It is in relation to such ambiguity that the ideas of anomaly and boundary are so effective. To which system of classification does the boundary belong - the differentiated or the one differentiated from? The boundary by definition implies both. Furthermore, we discover the paradox of the boundary itself: that which is intended to clarify functions equally to embrace ambiguity. The boundary serves as symbol for <u>both</u> clarity and ambiguity. This seems to me to elucidate what Turner referred to as "the peculiar unity of the liminal." The uniting of opposites on the boundary sets up a tension which amplifies that concept as a dynamic as well as topographical term. The concept of the boundary reinforces Turner's notion that liminality is a state of process; a state of neither/nor.

Douglas develops the idea of a boundary as an explicit theme through her analogy of the body as a bounded system which symbolizes society. While her concern is specifically not the intrapsychic, her

observations regarding the power of the symbolism of the body and its margins survives the transfer from social to psychological analysis and provides an apt introduction to Freudian body topography and symbolism as it relates to psychoanalytic liminality.

While a good portion of Douglas' book is taken up with this matter of boundary and bodily symbolism, the statements she makes which are most applicable for our purposes may be summarized briefly. Essentially, Douglas provides us with two important and mutually reinforcing notions. Her first assumption is of the richness of implication and of power of the body itself as a symbol. In keeping with our discussion so far, her second observation relates to the symbolic and conceptual potential provided by the boundaries, or margins, of the body.

> The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious. The body is a complex structure. The functions of its different parts and their relation afford a source of symbols for other complex structures.[27]

To reinforce her argument of the power implicit in bodily margins, she applies her theory of pollution: matter which traverses (exits) a bodily boundary falls into the anomalous-polluting category.

> We should expect the orifices of the body to symbolize its specially vulnerable points. Matter issuing from them is marginal stuff of the most obvious kind. Spittle, blood, milk, urine, feces or tears by simply issuing forth have traversed the boundary of the body. So also have bodily parings, skin, nail, hair clippings and sweat.[28]

With the exception of milk and tears, all of the "marginal stuff" she refers to bear clear connotations of pollution, and even milk and tears are conventionally "cleaned off" the exterior of the body. The implication of pollution, she argues is danger and therefore power. Boundaries cannot be tampered with without consequence. Within the context of liminality, the concept of the boundary is meaningful as a location, even a catalyst, of change. The following lines from Douglas are relevant.

> ...all margins are dangerous. If they are pulled this way or that, the shape of fundamental experience is altered. Any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins.[29]

The image is a striking one: if bodily margins are changed, then experience is changed. A statement of this power takes us to the heart of Freud's theory of personality.

The idea of the body is so central to Freud's through that its function and significance may be approached in any number of ways. At the root of his interest in the body is Freud's persistence in hypothesizing a somatic relationship to all mental processes. However, the ideas of the body I am interested in are best suggested through the topographical and structural aspects of Freud's theory of personality, specifically through his later discussions of ego and id.

In The Ego and the Id (1923), and later in the New Introductory Lectures (1933), Freud draws a complex map of the mental apparatus. In

this model, he presents a more developed concept of the psychical agencies and describes the relationship between them. I have already attempted to present these concepts (namely, id, ego, conscious, unconscious, preconscious, etc.) in an introductory fashion in Chapter IV. In that discussion I was concerned both with the relationship of regression to insight as that process involved with the various mental agencies and with the function of the ego to negotiate this process. I discussed the mediating and synthesizing function of the ego to effect change and power. The nature of the ego and its relationship to the other facets of the mental apparatus, namely, the id, is once again the focus of my discussion. This time I wish to enlarge upon the mediating function of the ego as it relates to liminality. I am now taking the further step of conceptualizing this mediation as a boundary activity. In so doing, my objective is to show how the ego in analysis becomes a liminal ego.

In its contingency with all of the other mental processes, we may say of the ego descriptively that it functions as a boundary mediator in its natural state, with or without the particular activity of intentional self scrutiny. Such natural activity of boundary mediation is not, however, liminal. Liminality is a strictly initiatory term. It refers only to neophytes in passage. Therefore the ego only becomes truly liminal when it engages itself in an initiatory activity such as analysis. In fact when the ego enters analysis, it gains access to a

boundary which is hitherto unavailable to it. This is the boundary between ego and id created by repression. This boundary becomes the location of critical activity in analysis. Other boundaries may be conceptualized, but all finally related to this one.

In analysis, the ego engages in negotiation with the following liminal boundaries: those of social reality, the ego itself, and the id. While these boundaries may be discussed separately, all are finally one and the same: that between the inner reality of the psyche and the outer reality of the world as it is perceived by consciousness. All boundary mediations are integral with the myth-making process described in Chapter IV. All embrace, on some level, a regression and all processes are articulated by the conscious ego. The boundary of social reality is created between the analyst and the ego of the analysand. In this case, transactions of myth occur through the transference and the countertransference as I have discussed. The boundary of the ego, from another point of view, is created by an interaction of the ego with itself as the defenses undergo transformation, or alteration, through ego analysis. The concept of modification of the ego implies that the ego regresses as the defenses set up increasing resistance to the process of analysis.[30] Ultimately, the strengthened ego becomes its own mythical product. Finally, the boundary of the id is created by the interaction of ego and id, and the substance of mythical regression is provided by memories which have been repressed and

which can only be retrieved through the regressive activity of id analysis.

A core of tension is supplied, in the case of both the ego boundary and the id boundary, by the dynamic of the repressed. In both cases of id and ego analysis, the focus of activity upon the dynamic repressed evokes the interplay of conscious and unconscious. The analytic method of mythmaking extracts this interplay through the technique of free association. During free association, the analysand makes every attempt to suspend logical reasoning processes and allows her/his mind to drift randomly. Through this process, the mind begins the work of undoing repressions and retrieving forgotten memories. By suspending the logical and directive processes of ordinary thinking (in effect abandoning the objectives of the secondary process), the id may then respond by making contact with consciousness. "Our procedure consists in abandoning all those purposive ideas which normally govern our reflections...and in then taking note of whatever involuntary thoughts may occur to us in connection with it."[31]

The patient is furthermore asked to obey "the fundamental rule" of analysis: to <u>speak</u> all of these involuntary thoughts, omitting nothing whatsoever, regardless of whether their content appears to be offensive or embarrassing. In my discussion of the activities of the preconscious, I explained why the act of speech is essential to fantasy recall. Through free association, it is now the unconscious mind which "speaks."

This state of mind, which the shamans experienced as trance, seems to me to epitomize what Turner had in mind as "betwixt and between." The ability to free associate is the ability to embrace ambiguity. Thoughts, fantasies, dream material emerge which may be totally contradictory. Often, their source is uncertain: is the thought old or new, is it attributable to the patient of the analyst, etc.? The fantasies which emerge in free association may be likened to the sacra which are exhibited during ritual liminality - distorted, sometimes bizarre, posing a contrast and a challenge to the given order of things. Sacra, like fantasies are speech related phenomena. Turner makes the following observations about the function of sacra to recall deeper cultural experiences and generate myth.

> These symbols, visual and auditory, operate culturally as mnemonics, or as communications engineers would no doubt have it, as "storage bins" of information, not about progmatic techniques, but about cosmologies values, and cultural axioms, whereby a society's deep knowledge is transmitted one generation to another. Such a device, in the setting of "a place that is not a place, and a time that is not a time"...is all the more necessary in cultures without writing, where the whole cultural deposit has to be transmitted either through speech or by repeated observation of standardized behavioral patterns and artifacts.[32]

If sacra provide the "crux of liminality," so too, is there a liminal core to psychoanalysis. This core of psychoanalysis is once again the body. It appears ultimately in the fantasies of free

association, during analysis of both ego and id.

In ego analysis, we find the defenses under examination are ultimately expressions of bodily margins.

> A person's own body, and above all its surface, is a place from which both external and internal perceptions may spring. It is seen like any other object, but to the touch it yields two kinds of sensations, one of which may be equivalent to an internal perception. Psycho-physiology has fully discussed the manner in which a person's own body attains its special position among other objects in the world of perception. Pain, too, seems to play a part in the process, and the way in which we gain new knowledge of our organs during painful illnesses is perhaps a model of the way by which in general we arrive at the idea of our body.
>
> The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface, i.e. the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body.[33]

If the ego is a bodily ego, then we can perceive an alteration in the defenses as an alteration in the ego-body. If this alteration does in fact affect the nature of individual capacity to act or feel, then we may add psychoanalytic varacity to Douglas' observation that if margins are "pulled this way or that, the shape of fundamental experience is altered."[34]

In id analysis, the image of the body can also be found. As noted, all experience, however it may be later grasped in cognitive or abstract

terms, is initially sensation received through the perceptual apparatus and stored as such in the id. As the individual regresses back to early childhood, the history of his or her infantile sexuality is recalled and relived. Memories of bodily experience emerge which underly the formation of symptoms and the creation of the ego's defenses. Investigation of these symptoms and the experience reveal that a damaged (neurotic) psyche is a damaged body image. Freud's metaphor for this damage is his famous castration complex. While the bodily and psychic interpretation of this complex is experiences through different anatomical and psychic responses for each sex the experience of body damage is common to both.

> Both in therapeutic and character-analyses we are struck by the prominence of two themes which give the analyst an extraordinary amount of trouble. It soon becomes clear that some general principle is at work here. These two themes are connected with the difference between the sexes: one is characteristic of men and the other equally characteristic of women. In spite of the difference in their content there is an obvious correspondence between the two. Some factor common to both sexes is forced, by the difference between them, to express itself differently in the one and in the other.
>
> The two corresponding themes are, in women, envy for the penis - the striving after possession of a male genital - and, in men, the struggle against their passive or feminine attitude towards other men. What is common to these two themes was singled out by early psychoanalytic nomenclature as an attitude to the castration complex. Subsequently, Alfred Adler brought the term "masculine protest"

> into current use. It fits the case of men perfectly; but I think that, from the first, "repudiation of femininity" would have been the correct description of this remarkable feature in the psychical life of mankind.[35]

To sum up the above paragraphs, men and women alike struggle against an image of their body which suffers by contrast with the opposite sex. Bodily margins for men and women provide conflict in their asymmetry. Awareness of these differences provokes the core of boundary dialectics and paradox. The contemplation of the body and its margins evokes and inextricable relationship between two bodies: the whole body of the self and the damaged body recalled by the altered margins of the other sex. Freud remarks on the paramount significance of these two in one theme at the conclusion of his essay, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable."

> We often feel that, when we have reached the wish for a penis and the masculine protest, we have penetrated all the psychological strata and reached "bedrock" and that our task is accomplished. And this is probably correct, for in the psychical field the biological factor is really the rock-bottom.[36]

It is now apparent that "psychoanalytic sacra" reflect precisely what Turner discovered: a vital contrast. In the ego and the id we find margins impaired and efforts to reconstruct them. In analysis, the synthesizing capacity of the ego struggles against the

disintegrated symbols in the id. A metaphor emerges of a body in dialogue with itself; as the ego erodes repressions, a new image of bodily integrity grows out of the process of recalling fantasies of bodily injury. In Douglas' metaphor, the cycle of pollution is completed; dirt achieves its own category. The life-in-death symbolism of initiation is transacted in the timeless zone of psychoanalytic liminality. The shaman's skeleton has been envisioned.

CHAPTER V - FOOTNOTES

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C H A P T E R VI

CONCLUSION

In Chapter V, in some detail, I discussed how initiatory situations ideally provoke a state of deep contemplation. In archaic cultures, this contemplation is directed at the paradoxes of the given cultural milieu (e.g. Douglas' Lele pangolin). Liminal contemplation is compared by Victor Turner and Mary Douglas to the accomplishment of western forms of metaphysical thought wherein the ambiguities and contradictions of experience are confronted in an effort to deepen awareness and understanding of the nature of reality. Reality is described for the archaic neophyte through the social myths of the culture. Black Elk learned the secret wisdom of the Sioux grandfathers by discovering the origins of the Sious cosmos and visiting the spirits which were present at its creation. For the psychoanalytic neophyte, a corresponding experience of liminality takes the analysand back to the origins of personal experience through retrieval of repressed fantasies of the body. Both kinds of neophyte reconstruct a history of the past within the present and, in constructing this history, participate in the construction of reality. The psychoanalytic history differs from the archaic in that it is personal, although, like the archaid, it is also social (but not public).

The social nature of this mythmaking process has some important

implications for the practice of constructing reality in the mental health field. From our discussion of analytically induced regression within the context of the therapeutic relationship, it may be concluded that insight, as well as being a product of regression, is also a socially induced phenomenon. The entire psychoanalytic myth (which is constructed through the emergence of multiple insights) is also socially induced. This construction occurs, not spontaneously from the efforts of the analysand, but by the specific intervention of the analyst. Freud described this process as follows:

> We all know that the person who is being analyzed has to be induced to remember something that has been experienced by him and repressed; and the dynamic determinants of this process are so interesting that the other portion of the work, the task performed by the analyst, has been pushed into the background. The analyst has neither experienced nor repressed any of the material under consideration; his task is to make out what has been forgotten from the traces which it has left behind or, more correctly, to construct it. The time and manner in which he conveys his constructions to the person who is being analysed, as well as the explanations with which he accompanies them, constitute the link between the two portions of the work of analysis, between his own part and that of the patient.[1]

The psychoanalytic myth, therefore, is the product of a relationship between two people. The raw material for the story, or its content, is provided by the memory of the analysand. Form is given to the content

through the verbal interaction of both analyst and analysand. Here the authority of the analyst becomes a critical factor in the development of the myth.

Through his/her sanctioned role to interpret and construct the contents of the analysand's unconscious, the analyst is granted authority and power over the analysand's personal reality. This same relationship exists between the shamanic neophyte and shamanic elder who must witness and sanction the neophyte's experience of the cosmic origins. The shamanic elder knows the secret nature of those origins and his authority is absolute.

> ...between instructors and neophytes there is often complete authority and complete submission; among neophytes there is often complete equality... The authority of the elders is absolute, because it represents the absolute, the axiomatic values of society in which are expressed the "common good" and the common interest.[2]

The psychoanalytic neophyte experiences the cosmic return through his or her own private symbols or fantasies. However, the basic structure of reality, as the analyst instructs, is not subject to alteration. The underlying structure which Freud determined to be universal for everyone is presented by the theory of infantile sexuality. (Of course, all Freud's theories described the operation of reality and its perception by the human mind. Specifically I refer here to that

part of human experience which is the subject of psychoanalysis: early childhood.) Each of us must pass through oral, anal and phallic stages of development and each must find a resolution of the oedipus complex. What differentiates one personal myth from another is how these stages are experienced. But the existence of the stages is itself indisputable. As the neophyte-analysand recalls and reconstructs these early stages, his/her version of reality is both witnessed and sanctioned. It is important to understand it is in the nature of the psychoanalytic construction of reality, that even personal (psychological, as Freud called it) reality does not exist (socially) unless it is corroborated by the authority of the analyst.

Within the context of this complex social-therapeutic relationship, the neophyte analysand becomes liminal, entering the state of "betwixt and between," when the neophyte is neither what s/he was or will become. A review of Freud's own experience of the liminal period illustrates much about the nature of this experience and its potential for both power and danger for the subject.

Freud's Liminality

If we reexamine Freud's letters to Fliess during the period of his self-analysis, particularly during the year 1897, many descriptive phrases emerge which suggest liminality. In Chapter IV, I pointed out the changes of mood and extremes of feeling which Freud's self-analysis subjected him to. He describes the confusing impact of these

temperamental vicissitudes, in the October 31, 1897 letter, as follows: "The most disagreeable thing about it is one's moods, which often completely hide reality from one."[3] This passage provides an important evaluation of Freud's ambiguous sense of reality, a critical characteristic of the liminal experience. Freud's statement reveals the vulnerability of his frame of mind, a disclosure which is reinforced by other passages from letters to Fliess during this period. In many of these, he compares himself to his own analysands and the particular sensations they complain of during the course of treatment.

> When I was in the very midst of it it suddenly broke down for three days, and I had the feeling of inner binding about which my patients complain so much, and I was inconsolable...[4]

> I am now experiencing myself all the things that as a third party I have witnessed going on in my patients - days when I slink about depressed because I have understood nothing of the days dreams, phantasies or mood, and other days when a flash of lightning brings coherence into the picture, and what has gone before is revealed as preparation for the present.[5]

Freud even makes use of an image which Eliade would describe as initiatory when he says, "I believe I am in a cocoon, and heaven knows what sort of creature will emerge from it."[6] On August 8, 1897, he feels blocked in both analysis and writing and says, simply, "I still do not know what has been happening to me."[7]

The contradictory nature of liminality emerges most clearly in Freud's letters. Liminality is a process of illumination for the neophyte, but it is, at the same time, a process of great confusion. As Jones has observed about Freud, "His insight was much more gradually gained than is often supposed. Things that are now so clear were obscure enough then."[8] If self-discovery is a painful, obscure and ambiguous process, then it follows that the sense of identity, and all the values and assumptions about self and world which cohere to the idea of identity, may be deeply disrupted at this time. Liminality, as the period of personal mythmaking, is the time when the sense of reality is most fluid, most subject to influence. As Freud was given to speculate, "Heaven knows what sort of creature will emerge."

The transference which he developed to Fliess during the period of Freud's liminality (self-analysis) shows evidence of both those phenomenon. Not only did Freud develop an intense dependency on Fliess' friendship for support and understanding, he extended this dependency and susceptibility into the very heart of his theoretical work. Freud both wrote to Fliess in great detail of his own evolving discoveries and reciprocally gave great attention to Fliess' favorite theories of periodicities in human beings and nasal reflex neuroses. These were theories which he ultimately came to discard completely, reserving perhaps only Fliess' influence in the development of the theory of

bisexuality. Admirers and biographers of Freud have wondered at the ability Freud demonstrated at this time to grant such extensive credibility to a mind which was inferior to his own. Jones notes that, "The extreme dependence he displayed toward Fliess, though in diminishing degree, up the the age of forty-five, has almost the appearance of a delayed adolescence."[9] To this observation, Schur has added his analysis.

> Which aspects of Freud's relationship to Fliess were comparable to a transference relationship in the analytic situation? First, the extreme overevaluation of the object which blunts the critical evaluation of the latter's qualities, work, scientific accomplishments, etc.; then, an exaggerated need for approval and praise; a tendency to deny any negative feelings...; an alternation between submissiveness and defiance indicating the ambivalence which is unavoidable in any regular analysis.[10]

I have emphasized the potentially excessive susceptibility on the part of the analysand to the analyst's interpretation of the analysand's subjective state. When ultimately the transference is analyzed and resolved, this susceptibility is replaced by the subject's own sense of personal authority and power. This sense of authority is derived from the newly analyzed and synthesized ego, now strengthened in its capacity to test reality. When Freud reached this point, his relationship to Fliess came to an end. He continued his self-analysis for the rest of his life. But he continued it alone, outside of a social

relationship.

I have stated from the outset that the experience of Freud in self-analysis constitutes an ideal model, but we may nevertheless begin to draw some conclusions about less ideal situations which have been subsequently developed. We can now return to the question of how the psychoanalytic construction of reality lends itself to the abuses of power and responsibility in the mental health field.

Conclusions and Speculations

Through the hierarchical structuring of supervisory relationships within the mental health professions, a situation exists which resembles an ongoing initiatory process. While "graduated" by their professions, mental health practitioners retain a quasi-neophyte status so long as they remain attached to a social institution where they must account to more experienced supervisors. (These institutional facilities, particularly community and residential treatment centers, dominate the practice of mental health.) While a degree of new authority may be assumed by a credentialed practitioner, there is usually another more credentialed, or more empowered, authority figure presiding.

Within this structure of supervisory relationships, we discover that the very business of the mental health field is the business of liminality: the continual reevaluation and reconstruction of reality. The supervisory process, developed on the psychoanalytic model, provides a constant assault on the individual's private as well as

professional sense of reality. In analysis, the analyst elicits material as the patient becomes ready to deal with it. Freud remarked pointedly on the potential destructiveness of premature interpretation.[11] In supervision, however, such restraint is rarely practiced. In fact, it is forcibly violated by the necessity to deal immediately with material elicited by the practitioner's clients. Such a procedure (which is derived from the model of training analysis) need not be abusively practiced. But it requires an extraorginarily seasoned and unimpeachably motivated professional to skirt the pitfalls successfully and constructively, as a true master shaman might.

One may wish to argue that assaults on one's personal world occur as a matter of course to everyone, no matter what his or her occupation, and this is true. However, the attack on reality wielded by the mental health supervisor carries a special potency because these professionals are the recognized and sanctioned <u>experts</u> in defining psychological reality. Furthermore, within the mental health field, psychological reality is the reigning reality in <u>both</u> private and professional spheres. There is, in effect, no escape from the authorized reality. In no other field, except perhaps the religious, does such awesome and pervasive authority and power accrue to its superiors. Most professions allow the individual to define the private world apart from the professional, and the professional supervisor

is therefore limited in the degree of incursion permitted into the private life of the subordinate. In the mental health field, no such line is drawn or held; it is by nature perpetually traversed. Any judgment which is made of professional competence invariably becomes a judgment of private competence and worth as well. The subordinate is therefore always vulnerable at the margins of the private as well as professional staff and thereby doubly susceptible in the effort to achieve professional identity and competence.

The outcome of this complex system of supervision is a proclivity on the part of the practitioner to experience a protracted liminality which extends beyond the time frame of the official initiation. Freud himself laid the groundwork for this supervisory development when he suggested that analysts return for further analysis periodically.[12] However, he neither suggested a situation of chronic analysis by a supervisor nor did he himself follow such a model. Freud forever remained his own analyst, never again subjecting himself to an authority figure such as Fliess represented at one time, but maintaining instead the authority of his integrity in the quest for truth and testing his perceptions and conclusions among colleagues and peers.

The institutionalization of liminality, which is achieved through supervisory relationships in the mental health profession, implies that the individual is placed continually on a psychic boundary. This kind

of liminality is more insidious than the strictly initiatory type because it is only semi-official and therefore doubly ambiguous. Official liminality (which occurs in a formal rite of passage) implies an outcome, a completion of the passage from which the new being emerges with new powers, released finally from inferior status. On the other hand, this semi-official liminality is ambiguous not only for the practitioner who is now chronically incomplete in the effort to define him or herself professionally and personally, but also for the client whose own liminality is subject to a liminal authority figure. In this fashion, institutionalized liminality becomes self-perpetuating. The dangers of institutionalized liminality are by now self-evident: regression is induced, mythmaking and reality are undefined, identity is challenged, and the lines of personal power and authority are always subject to violation. The individual may attempt a solution to these dangers in a variety of ways.

Possible Solutions

To begin with, there is latent power in liminality, as well as danger. Turner remarks of the neophyte, "His apparent passivity is revealed as an absorption of powers which will become active after his social status has been redefined in the aggregation rites."[13] Turner's concern, however, is the potential for social power exhibited by liminal beings and mine is the potential for psychological or

personal power. Turner makes the point that socially liminal beings are allowed to develop contradictory life styles which reflect reactionary insight into the nature of the social fabric. "Major liminal situations are occasions on which a society takes cognizance of itself..."[14] Liminals may respond to hierarchy by demonstrating egalitarianism, sometimes are expected to reverse sexual codes of behavior, etc.[15] My point is that a parallel may be drawn for the psychological liminar, who may or may not also be socially liminal or who may be semi-socially liminal as in the case of mental health practitioners. Strictly speaking, credentialed mental health practitioners are not socially liminal from the standpoint that they are doing a professional job just like anyone else in society. They are psychologically liminal for all the reasons I have stated. They are semi-socially liminal insofar as professional practice institutionalizes ongoing training.

The latent power which resides in psychological liminality is the power of insight into the self which may enable the individual to change. Insight, however, does not always occur in liminal persons (or analysands) and it is not an experience which can be guaranteed. In Chapter IV, I discussed the process of the "analytic pact" whereby the analyst lends the support of his or her ego to the weakened ego of the analysand in order to achieve the necessary insights. The neophyte is clearly dependent on the analyst for power in this

situation. While this process may be ineffective even in ideal circumstances, imagine the potential for damage if the analytic authority figure uses his or her power in a less than benign and responsible fashion. The concept of the analytic pact clearly implies that the outcome of the endeavor is a joint responsibility. The neophyte must work to achieve a sense of powerful self. The analytic authority figure must work to surrender power to the neophyte's private sense of authority. This work is an act of balancing on the part of the analyst who must, as we noted, know when to make interpretations and constructions and when to refrain, and who must always seek ultimately the corroboration of the analysand for truth.[16]

Returning to the institution considered in the preface, we may now speculate about what happened there. I have hypothesized that the institutional setting was characterized by a pervasive liminality experienced by all but the highest authority figures, whom I do not call liminal due to their (socially) fixed status as institutional directors. The rest of the staff, due to the neo-initiatory status of all, were both socially and psychologically liminal. Two questions which I asked in the preface were, if the liminality experienced was such a painful and destructive one, why did so many of us endure it for so long and why, then, did we finally leave? Group behavior was operational in our situation and served to reinforce many of the

characteristics of liminality, particularly overvaluation of the authority figure and suspension of individual critical faculties.[17] In fact, group behaviors are characteristic of liminars because most neophytes are initiated in groups. The shamans and the psychoanalysts are somewhat unique in that their initiations occur singly. Nevertheless, as individuals they also become liminal. At the institution in question, we experienced liminality individually in individual supervisory conferences and as a group during staff meetings. This liminality appeared to work in two different ways. Initially it reinforced passivity and dependence on the part of individual staff who were accepting of official authority. Eventually, it reinforced independence on the part of group members who found individual means to leave the institution. This latter behavior, it turns out, is equally a potential product of liminality as is the former.

Liminality, through its focus on contradictions and its objective to deepen awareness, by its nature perpetually challenges the status quo. If the status quo happens to be a destructive one - as existed in the institution I have described in the preface - the challenge may have ultimately healthy results. It is possible - not only possible, but very common in analysis where this behavior goes under the heading of "resistances" - for the neophyte to directly challenge the authorized version of reality in favor of his or her own. The success of such a

challenge hinges on one critical factor: the corroboration of the neophyte's personal reality which must be granted by an alternative authority figure: a person, idea, or way of life. The liminal situation often provides precisely such an alternative. It comes from other liminal persons who have equal status within the hierarchy - essentially peers. During official liminal periods, the peer group of neophytes often develops its own sense of extra-social identity and attendant value system which are the products of a shared consciousness. Victor Turner refers to this phenomenon as communitas.[18] There is the potential, through support for this shared consciousness, for it to be converted into action and into power. In official initiatory situations, however, communitas is tolerated because the expectation is that ultimately these ambiguous and contradictory beings will assimilate into a new status within the sanctioned social structure. The expectation in analysis is that resistances should be overcome and reality aligned with the authorized version. Furthermore, the neophyte analysand has no equivalent support group to reinforce resistance. If, however, resistances are not overcome, the patient often exits from treatment, just as many of us quit our jobs in 1970.

There are ideal and less ideal ways to exit liminality and this issue takes us back to the core dilemma of power and responsibility. As we noted, the realization of neophyte power and authority must be

mutually transacted through the analytic pact. As the neophyte increases responsibility for the construction of reality, the authority figure must begin to relinquish it. If this does not occur, then the liminal situation crystallizes in non-productivity and the neophyte may never emerge. The cause may be excessive dependence by the analysand, excessive authoritarianism by the analyst or a blend of both. Theoretically, the good analyst does not allow his or her authority to interfere with development but uses it to facilitate increasing neophyte autonomy.

At institutions such as I have described, mutual transactions of power and responsibility in the construction of reality do not occur. Therefore, the only options for the practitioners at these facilities are either to remain fixatedly liminal and vulnerable or to leave the system completely. A healthier system would provide for the natural evolution through the liminal period to assumption of increased psychological as well as social authority. Such a system would necessarily also imply less rigidity in authoritarian and hierarchical relationships together with a deinstitutionalization of liminal status. In 1970, there were those of us who did not leave as well as those who did. It may be that those who stayed did not acquire the same awareness of our shared dilemma. Or perhaps they were granted some measure of authority and power which others of us did not receive. For those

of us who left, our reasons also probably differed. Some who left clearly felt the decision grew from a new sense of personal and professional understanding and self-direction. This was reflected in subsequent choices of alternative work settings. Others of us appeared to have left more as an act of group participation, and, predictably, some of these returned to similar settings, only to repeat their experience.

In conclusion, this is not an argument for or against liminality but for its proper management. Liminality, if it were experienced only once in a lifetime would provide us with small opportunity for creative endeavor and development. On the other hand, the latent power in liminality must be acknowledged by the liminal person and ultimately responsibility for that power must be assumed. To do so implies a process of individuation whereby personal authority solidifies and the personal myth is completed. On the other hand, to never again challenge one's own personal authority or idea of self would be to fall off the other end of the see-saw. Yet, to remain in protracted liminality indefinitely is to remain indefinitely irresponsible. Ultimately, there should be a choice made by individuals at both ends: to both enter liminality and to exit with the assumption of liminal power and the responsibility for it. Such choices must be provided for by responsible authorities. Otherwise the dangers of liminality become institutionalized.

CHAPTER VI - FOOTNOTES

1. Freud, S., The Standard Edition (London, 1964) vol. 23; 258, 259.

2. Turner, V., Forest of Symbols (Ithaca, 1970) 99, 100.

3. Freud, S., Origins of Psychoanalysis: Letters to Wilhelm Fliess (New York, 1954) 227. (Letter #73, October 31, 1897)

4. Ibid., 221. (Letter #71, October 15, 1897)

5. Ibid., 226. (Letter #72, October 27, 1897)

6. Ibid., 211. (Letter #65, June 12, 1897)

7. Ibid., 212. (Letter #66, July 7, 1897)

8. Jones, Ernest, The Life's Work of Sigmund Freud (New York, 1965) vol. I; 321.

9. Ibid., 295.

10. Schur, Max, Freud: Living and Dying (New York, 1972).

11. Freud, S., Therapy and Technique (New York) 152, 153, 165.

12. Ibid., 122, 123.

13. Turner, Forest of Symbols, 102.

14. Turner, V., Dramas, Fields and Metaphors (Ithaca, 1974) 239, 240.

15. Turner, V., The Ritual Process (Chicago, 1969) 95ff, 103ff.

16. Freud, S., The Standard Edition (London, 1964) vol. 23; 262.

17. See: Freud, S., Group Psychology & The Analysis of the Ego (New York, 1959).

18. Turner, Dramas, Fields and Metaphors, 232.

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